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IN SIX BOOKS:

BY THE REV. SPENCER MADAN, A. M.  
RECTOR OF ST. PHILIP'S, BIRMINGHAM.

“ Look into a Book so common that almost every Body has it,  
 “ and so excellent that no Person ought to be without it ---  
 “ GROTIUS ON THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN  
 “ RELIGION.”

WATSON'S APOLOGY FOR THE BIBLE.--LETTER 3.

BIRMINGHAM:

RE-PRINTED BY E. PIERCY, IN BULL-STREET. 1797.



207



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## THE PREFACE.

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A CHEAP edition of Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible has been for some time in general circulation :—In that work, the Bishop of Llandaff has so ably refuted the shallow and profane writings of Thomas Paine against the Truth and Authenticity of the Bible, and has so fully exposed his ignorant and blasphemous attempts against the vitals of all religion, that it is the duty of every man to peruse the book attentively, as he values the character and the hope of a Christian! The language is plain, and the arguments are conclusive; so that all ranks of men may “read and understand;” “with the heart believing unto righteousness, and with the mouth making confession unto salvation.” (*Romans* x. 10.)

But it is superfluous (if not impertinent) to state my sentiments more fully upon the merits of that performance.—I have named it (and who can name it without a note of admiration!) because the Bishop's observations and testimony in favour of my author, and his Lordship's example in the mode of publication, have induced me to offer this treatise in its present form, to the notice of my Townsmen in particular, and of my Countrymen at large.

It seems proper to premise, that when first I endeavoured to prepare myself for the sacred office of a Christian Minister, it was my instructive employ-

ment to translate into English the following Treatise of Hugo Grotius on the Truth of Christianity.

The easy nature of my task made me not apprehensive of any unfavourable construction of my motives, in publishing this translation\* fifteen years ago: and I am willing to believe, that my present time of life will secure me still more from the imputation of self-conceit, or of the slightest pretensions to literary fame, in the step which I now take. Indeed, it seems ridiculous to deprecate a charge of this nature upon the present occasion. But however trivial and secondary my office may appear, the merits of the *original* are eminently great. Now, it is my duty, and my wish, to communicate to others the conviction which I feel myself, from the following short treatise, upon that highest object of all human inquiry, the Truth of Christianity; and, therefore, it seems advisable, that the public attention should, *by any means*, be drawn to a perusal of this work. The times more especially require it:—Times, in which the principles of barbarous anarchy, and of mad infidelity would equally deprive us of all present comfort, and all future bliss! Hence the more particular obligation, the more urgent necessity, of counteracting that poison which is infused with wicked industry, and cruel artifice, into every vein of the public body, by circulating through the same channels those valuable antidotes, which contain the most wholesome and efficacious evidence of the Christian Faith! In the present small treatise, that evidence amounts to demonstration; and if my

\* The Translator having been assured that a second edition, in type and paper like the former, would be acceptable to several individuals, intends shortly to prepare it for the press, with a translation of the two supplementary books by Le Clerc, and with occasional notes.

situation in this large and important place, and my more immediate connexion with a populous and respectable part of it, should happily promote its local circulation, the consequences, I should hope, must be beneficial to many in settling and securing their religious principles. It is natural, and it is right, that those principles should stand or fall as the Authenticity of the Bible, and the Truth of Revelation, shall be established or overthrown. This, then, is a point of unspeakable importance to every soul of man; to the poorest, as much as to the richest members of every Church and Nation in the Christian World!

Now a sober and dispassionate perusal of this single book may be justly expected to satisfy every honest and ingenuous mind; to fix the wavering, and confirm the faithful: and should I thus become the means of transmitting consolation or conviction to any individual, whose thoughts may have been distressed or disturbed by the specious reasonings of a false philosophy, or by the infamous assertions of a blind unbelief, my endeavours will receive their happiest recompense!—Wretched reasoners, indeed, are they, who can seek to cheat us of our main support—To shake our confidence in that rock of ages, Jesus Christ, the righteous!—Wretched cavillers, indeed, are they, who can doubt or deny the Foundation of our Faith!

The Holy Scriptures have been scrutinized and sifted to the bottom: they have stood the test of ages—They have undergone (as it was fit) the most minute inquiry by enemies as well as friends—by men of the highest character in point of station, abilities, and learning, at different periods and in distant nations—The fear of God, and the faith of Christ, have greatly surmounted the most violent as-

faults: they have hitherto prevailed against "the gates of hell." — Christianity subsisted during the three first centuries not only without the protection of the civil government, but in direct opposition to the sword of power, wielded with exterminating fury; nay it became only the more rooted by those struggles which must have overthrown it, had it been "the counsel or the work of man!" (*Acts* v. 38.) It baffled all the wit, and strength, and malice, of its most cruel and inveterate persecutors; and has not only maintained but enlarged its influence, by means apparently unequal to its arduous contest with a wicked world for almost eighteen hundred years! Shall we *now* abandon the sacred cause! Shall we *now*, like Judas, betray our Master? Shall we brand the enlightened times in which we live, with the infamous mark of a general Apostasy disgraceful to the *darkest* ages?

The authority of the Scriptures will be seen to stand upon the most complete and conclusive evidence which any antient writings can possibly possess—The third book of the ensuing treatise, may alone convince any rational and impartial reader that the proofs of his own existence are not more satisfactory than those which establish the Authenticity of the Scriptures! So true is that "saying, and worthy of all men to be received that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." (*1. Tim.* i. 15.) If this be so, what is the immediate, the unavoidable inference? Shall we now suffer the "Enemy and the Blasphemer" to burn our very Bibles and to cancel all our hopes of *eternal Salvation*! To rob us of this highest consolation which our nature can enjoy! To deprive us of this *divine aid*, so powerful in all temporal calamities!—in sickness—in poverty—in sorrow! So enlivening in the gloomy



gloomy hour of distress and despondency---so cheering in the bitterness of pain---so grateful to the wounded spirit of repentant sinners---so animating in every conflict of our mortal state---every struggle of life---every pang of death!--What equivalent for this can the whole world offer us, when the frame of nature is sinking under us; when kingdoms vanish, and their glories fade!

Reflexions of this tendency will naturally arise (and their influence will give us the most seasonable aid) when our minds are endeavouring to attain their proper temper for the study of Religious Truths. Let me hope that my readers are thus seriously disposed, upon a subject of all others the *most serious and important*! They will then see, with just sentiments of alarm and abhorrence, the *Madness of Irreligion*! They will cherish that Faith "which overcometh the world"--They will keep constantly in view, they will lay earnestly to heart, that awful alternative which is given to us all by our blessed Lord himself: "whosoever shall *confess* me before men, him will I *confess* also before my Father which is in Heaven: but whosoever shall *deny* me before men, him will I *deny* also before my Father which is in Heaven!" (*Matthew x. 32.* See also *Luke xii. 8.*)

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WE stand, at this moment, in a most interesting and conspicuous point of view, political and religious. As a Nation, we have long and gloriously displayed, to the envy and admiration of the whole world, the practical observance of those temperate, rational, and wise limits, which describe the



*highest point of Freedom.* As a Christian People, we are equally possessed of a still more glorious distinction;—the Temple of Religion in its purest and most reformed state.\* To maintain, inviolate, these greatest blessings, against the secret contagion of a wicked example, and the open rage of an inveterate foe, will prove (under Providence) their *intrinsic excellence*, and the *infinite value* of those principles which happily still animate the national Character.—O that we may “bow our hearts, as the heart of one man” to realize these sacred objects of a just ambition! that we may indeed preserve, as a bright and glorious exception,—the unequalled system of our Civil and Religious Constitution, amidst the struggles and the shock of nations! That these eminent privileges of genuine Christianity, and of true liberty, which the piety and the patriotism of our ancestors so nobly rescued, in two former ages, from superstitious and despotic chains, may never be surrendered to the intrigues of treachery, nor to the violence of invasion.

So shall this crisis of general consternation and danger (if we also profit by it to prove our Faith by a practical amendment of our lives) serve only to enhance, nationally, our temporal honours, and to promote individually, our eternal happiness, finally evincing to the whole Christian world that “all things work together for good to them that love God!” (*Romans viii. 28.*)

20 MA 59

SPENCER MADAN.

Birmingham, February 13, 1797.

\* Would to God that in this light also we could *practically* shew the perfection of our system! The foundation of our hope, would be then, indeed secure and joyful to our *temporal* and *eternal* advantage!

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T H E  
Truth of Christianity, &c.

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TO THE MOST NOBLE AND MOST EXCELLENT  
JEROME BIGNON,  
THE KING'S ADVOCATE IN THE SUPREME COURT  
OF AUDIENCE AT PARIS.

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BOOK THE FIRST.

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C H A P. I.

*The occasion of the present work.*

**W**HAT may be the purport of my writings, in behalf of Christianity, as they are delivered in my native language, is a question, Noble Sir, which you frequently propose to me; *you* who are a man entitled altogether to every honour which your country can confer, to every commendation which the cause of letters can bestow, and (suffer me to add) to every acknowledgment which my poor services can offer.—The question, I confess, I by no means wonder at from you; for a man of your extensive, or rather universal reading, assisted, at the same time, by the clearest judgement,

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judgment, cannot fail to recollect how highly the subtle disquisitions of Raymonde de Sebonde, the various matter of the Dialogues of Ludovicus Vives, the infinite erudition as well as eloquence of your own countryman Philippe Du Plessis Mornay, have polished and adorned that subject. It therefore might be thought a more useful undertaking to have translated for my countrymen, some work of the authors abovementioned, than to offer them a *new* Treatise.

What others may determine upon this particular, I know not; but a judge, of your lenity and goodness, will I trust, readily acquit me, if I say, that after having read not only the works we have been speaking of, but all the controversial writings also of the Jews and Christians, (the one in defence of the ancient Jewish, the other in defence of the Christian, dispensation) I have wished to form a judgment of my own, such as it may be, upon the point in question; and to give *that* freedom to my mind, which, when I was writing it, my body was forbidden to enjoy.

I was used to consider it incumbent on me to contend for the truth; to contend, indeed, for such a truth, as I myself could inwardly and cordially approve; well knowing how fruitless it would be to attempt the conviction of others in a matter, wherein I had not previously convinced myself. I selected therefore as well from ancient as from modern authors, whatever appeared to me the best and most authentic; having set aside every argument which I thought immaterial in point of weight; and rejected every book which I either knew with certainty, or with reason suspected, to be bad in point of authenticity. Whatever I myself was able to admit upon conviction, I then digested under



her proper heads, and explained in as familiar a manner as I could; and in order to assist the memory in retaining it, I turned it into verse. For my design was, to compose something that might be serviceable indeed to my fellow citizens in general, but especially to the seafaring part of our community; that so they might employ usefully, rather than beguile idly, as too many of them do, the number of leisure hours they must necessarily have upon their hands at sea. And therefore prefacing the work with some encomiums on the Dutch nation, representing them as easily capable of excelling others in the art of navigation, I urged them to employ that art, as a blessing peculiarly given from above, not only for the service of their private ends and temporal advantage, but also for the propagation of the *true*, or in other words the *Christian* religion. Sufficient opportunities, I observed, would constantly present themselves, in the course of long and distant voyages; continually meeting, as they must be, every where, either with Pagans, as in China or in Guinea; with Mahometans, as in the Turkish, the Persian, and the African dominions; or indeed, lastly, with Jews, (these also being now become professed enemies of Christianity) dispersed and scattered as they are into almost every country of the known world. Neither will they fail to find every where a sufficient number of evil-minded persons, at all times ready to disclose among the simple and unwary those poisonous opinions which fear may induce them to conceal elsewhere. It therefore is my earnest wish that my countrymen may be rightly armed against the dangers that await them; that they whom God hath blessed with superior abilities, may apply themselves with strenuous and manly resolution to overcome the errors of other men, while the rest, on their part, may at least be careful to defend themselves.

## C H A P. II.

## THE EXISTENCE OF A DEITY.

IN order then to shew that religion is a matter of no frivolous or imaginary nature, I begin in my first book, to enquire into the very foundation of it; I mean the existence of a Deity. The proof of which I thus attempt. All men *must* be sensible, and all men *do* acknowledge, that there are certain things which must have had a beginning. Now those things were not the cause of their own existence, for that which hath no existence can have no agency, neither could the thing itself *Be before it was*. It follows therefore that they must have had their origin from some other pre-existent cause. And this we must admit, not only in regard to those things which we ourselves either do see or have seen, but also in regard to those things whence *they* derived *their* origin, till at length, we can arrive at some cause, which never had a beginning, and which existed (as we are wont to express it) not casually but necessarily. Now this, whatever it may ultimately be, (which shall be the subject of a future enquiry) is that very essence which is signified by the word Deity or God. — Another proof of the existence of a Deity, arises from the manifest and concurrent opinion of all nations whatsoever, in which reason and morality are not absolutely extinguished by the introduction of downright barbarism.

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Now since *all* the institutions of man's arbitrary pleasure can never possibly be the same throughout all mankind, and are certain, from their very nature, to undergo continual changes; since, also, this notion (of a Deity) is found to be of the most absolute universality, neither has it been affected by the changes and revolutions of ages (a circumstance remarked even by Aristotle himself, who was a man by no means credulous in affairs of this nature) it is highly necessary that some general and universal reason for this fact should be assigned; and this *must* either be, a declaration from God himself, or a tradition which hath gradually descended from the first parents of mankind. The former of which, if we admit it, brings our *enquiry* into *proof*; if the latter, no sufficient reason surely can be given, to justify our belief that those first parents should willingly transmit to all posterity a falshood, in matters of the most important moment. This notion, moreover, discovers itself, whether we examine those parts of the world which were intimately known many years ago, or those but newly explored; wherever, as we before observed, the smallest spark of humanity remains yet unextinguished; as well among nations the most eminent either for natural abilities, or for acquired learning, as among those of inferior comprehension. Of the former, it is in no wise credible that they *could all* have been deceived; nor of the latter, that they could ever have found means to practise such a deceit (so universally) upon one another.— Neither is there room here for any one to offer in objection, those *few* persons, who, during the course of *many* ages, have either actually or professedly disbelieved the Divine Existence: since the very smallness of their number, and the universal rejection which their opinion hath met with as soon as their arguments have been understood, sufficiently demon-

strate that their idea resulted not from the proper application of that right reason, with which all men are endowed; but that it arose from an inquisitive partiality to all novel assertions, as eccentric as his, who was wont to contend that the colour of snow was black; or from a depraved and corrupt state of mind, to which, as to a vitiated palate, things give not their *real* relish: and this more especially, since from all histories and writings whatsoever, we learn that the more good and upright the character of each individual hath been, the more diligent hath been his perseverance in the notion and belief of a God.—Thus, therefore, while this departure from an opinion so anciently received, hath evidently for the most part arisen from the depraved understanding of those men, whose interest it is that there should be *no God*, that is, no judge of human actions; it is also evident to every one, upon a very moderate degree of consideration, that whether they wish rather to maintain as their position, an infinite general succession without any beginning, or the casual concurrence of atoms, or whatever else they please; it cannot have less, if it hath not greater difficulties, neither can it have greater credibility, than that which is at present established.—As to the objection of them who disbelieve, because they do not see, the Deity; surely, if they see any thing they *must* see the disgrace of such an idea to any man who only believes himself possessed of a mind; which very mind is equally invisible. Neither are we authorized to deny, because we are unable to comprehend, the nature of the Deity: as every inferior must necessarily, *as such*, be incompetent to understand those natures which are superior and more excellent. The beasts know not even what man is: much less do they know by what means he is able to institute and regulate societies; to mea-

sure



sure the courses of the stars, and to sail upon the ocean. All these things exceed their comprehension. Inasmuch then as the nature of man (and that by no power of his own) is made higher than the nature of beasts, he is fairly compelled to infer, that *that* power by which he was *so* made, cannot be less superior to the human, than he is to the brutal, creation; and that therefore some being doth exist, which as it is of an excellence superior to his, is also of a nature superior to the measure of his comprehension.

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### C H A P. III.

#### THE UNITY OF GOD.

**T**HE existence of a Deity being proved, we come now to consider his attributes. And first, there are not many gods, but *one* God. This appears from what we before observed, that God is that Being which exists necessarily and of itself. Now every thing exists necessarily and of itself, that can be considered not by way of *genus*||, but by way of *actuality*: for this actuality implies singularity. Whereas if you admit of *many* Gods, you can now find no *necessary cause* of existence in any *single one*; nor any reason for a belief in *two* rather than in three; in ten rather than in five. Moreover, the multiplication of individuals of the same species, depends up-

|| That is, not in the *general* notion of existence, but as a being *actually existing*; now a being in actual existence is *single*.

The Translator fears that in some few passages it is impossible to make his author perfectly intelligible to every class of readers, but these instances are very rare, and (like the present argument) are not of the *greatest weight*: ever reader will feel satisfied that he understands what is essential and conclusive, and as he advances in this book he will become, *more interested and more convinced*.



on the fecundity of causes, according to which the things themselves are produced in smaller or in greater numbers. But of God, there is no origin or cause whatsoever. Then again in different individuals are certain singular and respective properties and distinctions; which it is needless to declare of God, who is *essentially* necessary. Neither are any traces of a plurality of Gods any where observable. The entire system of the universe maketh but *one* world; therein is *one* most glorious body, the Sun; and indeed in every individual person is *one* ruling power, the mind.---Besides, if there were two or more supreme governors of the world, each of them *absolute* and *free*, they might have contrary determinations. The operations of one might consequently impede those of another; whereas the very idea of impediment is altogether derogatory from the Divine Being.

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## C H A P. IV.

### THE ABSOLUTE PERFECTION OF GOD.

**T**O enable us to have a knowledge of the other attributes of God, we must understand, that in him is *all imaginable perfection*. (The Greek expression is *Τελειότης*). And that every perfection in the nature of things either had or had not a beginning: that which had *no* beginning is of God. That which had a beginning necessarily began from something. And since none of those things, which are made, could be made from nothing, it follows, that those perfections visible in the effects, must have existed in the cause; that according to those perfections, the cause might be enabled to produce the

the effect, and that therefore they were all contained in the prime cause. Neither could the prime cause be deprived of any perfection at a subsequent period; or by any other means; for that which is eternal, dependeth not on other agencies, neither can it be affected by their operations, nor even by its own, since all nature invariably tends towards its own perfection.

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## CHAP. V.

### THE INFINITY OF GOD'S PERFECTIONS.

THE perfections of God must also be considered as of an *infinite* degree. Because the attribute of every other being has an end, either from the *limited communication* which it received from the producing cause, or from the *limited capacity* of the produced effect; but no nature communicates any thing of itself to God, neither does he himself receive any thing from any other, he being, as we have before observed, necessarily and self-existent.

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## CHAP. VI.

### GOD IS ETERNAL, ALMIGHTY, ALL-WISE, AND ALL GOOD.

IT is undeniably evident, that those things are said to be of greater excellence, which have life, than those which have none. The same must be clear in respect to power, intellects, and goodness.—Now

it follows, from what we have just been saying, that all these attributes are united in the Deity; and *that* in an *infinite* degree. It therefore follows, that he is of infinite life, that is, eternal; of boundless power, that is, Almighty; so also that he is all-wise, and entirely and unexceptionably good.

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## C H A P. VII.

### GOD IS THE UNIVERSAL CAUSE.

**T**HAT all things in existence derive the origin of that existence from God, is an inference inseparably connected with the foregoing premises. For we have conclusively agreed, that a being, necessarily and self-existent, must have an "intrinsic and essential *singularity*." Whence it follows that all other things must be produced from something distinct from themselves. And we have already seen, that all those things which originate from another, originate mediately, or immediately, from that which had no beginning; that is, from God. And not only doth our reason, but our very senses in a manner, evince this truth. For if we behold the wonderful construction, internal as well as external, of the human body, and observe how every the minutest part, hath its peculiar use and office, not by any laboured contrivance or diligent design of the parent, but by such exquisite art, that the most skilful philosophers and physicians can never express their admiration of it sufficiently, we cannot but be assured that the great "Artificer of the world" is infinitely wise and excellent. (See Galen on this subject, particularly where he considers the use of the

the eye and hand.) Yea, dumb as they are, the very animals speak to us the same truth. For not from any *material* cause or power, are the component parts of them so framed and fashioned; but for a *certain and appointed end*.

Nor of the animal creation *alone* is this (appointed end) observable; but even, as philosophers have accurately remarked, of the very plants and herbs. Strabo, in particular, hath made the same observation in the disposition of the watery element; for *that*, if we regard the gravitating quality of matter, ought properly to hold an intermediate place between the earth and air; whereas now it is poured forth and distributed throughout all the *terrestrial* division, doubtless that nothing might be ordained prejudicial to the fruitfulness of the earth, and the existence of mankind. Now to act so as to have some one ultimate end in view, is the property of an intelligent nature *only*: the operation, however, of each natural agent, individually, is not appointed *solely* with a view to its own peculiar end, but also for the general purpose of the whole world. We find the water mount upward, in contradiction to its innate properties\*, lest a yawning vacuum should intervene in the compact fabric of the universe; a fabric constituted to support itself by the constant cohesion of all its parts. Never then, it is most evident, could this grand universal end have been designed, never could the adequate power of operation, tending to the completion of that end, have

\* This notion is now exploded, and the effect universally accounted for by the law of gravity or attraction. The more modern explanation, however, does not in any degree weaken the inference to be drawn; for though a different cause may be assigned for the wonderful order of the work, our admiration of the Maker's wisdom must still be the same.



been implanted in the creation, but by that overruling wisdom to which this universe must own unlimited subjection.

Furthermore, it is manifest, that the methodical and pertinent line of action which even animals in some instances observe, must certainly originate in a principle of reason. In ants and bees this is most particularly apparent; but in other creatures also it is sufficiently visible, when, wholly unassisted by any previous experiment, they instinctively shun what would be hurtful, and seek after those things of proper and beneficial tendency. It is at the same time manifest, that they do not *independently* possess this faculty of discernment and distinction, from the uniform and exact similarity of method, in which they all invariably act, and from their total incapacity of other operations in no respect *more* difficult. Those actions therefore must necessarily proceed from some efficient source of reason, either externally directing them, or internally imparted to them; which source of reason is, in fact, none other than that which we call, *the Deity*.--Then again, how seasonably calculated for the fertility of the earth, how inconceivably well adapted to the constitution of every living creature, are the motions of the heavenly bodies, and of those chief glories of them, the sun and moon! The equator (it is true) would have been, on other accounts, a plainer and less intricate line of motion; but we see them commanded to proceed in the oblique circle of the ecliptic, that their service to the earth may be the *more extensively* beneficial. And whereas, to animals in general, *that* earth is made subservient, so especially to the dominion of man *all other* animals are subject; so that he can subdue the most ungovernable by his pre-eminent faculty of reason. From this consideration,  
even



even the Stoics were wont to infer, that the world was made for the sake of man. Inasmuch then as it is utterly beyond the reach of all human ability to *enforce* obedience from the heavenly bodies, neither is it credible that they have *voluntarily* bound themselves to observe any obedience; it follows, that some active principle of superior ability must certainly exist, commanding those bodies, all glorious as they are, to render perpetual service unto man, though his situation be so far beneath them. And what can we suppose this active principle to be, but the Maker of that planetary system---the Maker of the world at large!---The revolutions in particular of those planets, whereof some are said to be eccentric\*, and others epicyclical, afford ample testimony that they arise not from any necessary effect of matter, but at the appointment of a Being altogether free and independent. The fixed stars bear witness of the same, in their different disposition throughout the firmament of heaven. The vast disproportion also of the land and waters. To what other agency is it *possible* to ascribe the *partial direction* of the coelestial bodies? The beautiful perfection likewise displayed even in the very figure § of

\* Here again, and in some other particular passages, we find notions which are now exploded. But here likewise the comment of the foregoing note may with equal justice be repeated.---Ptolemy, an Egyptian philosopher who flourished about 138 years before Christ, first taught this doctrine of a number of circles, called eccentrics and epicycles, crossing and interfering with one another, in order to account for the motions of the heavenly bodies, according to *his* system, which the Peripatetics maintained universally, till Copernicus restored, in 1530, the Pythagorean or *true* system of the universe

§ The later editions omit the word *rotunda*, which is to be found in the original, as the opinion of Sir Isaac Newton was decidedly confirmed by experiment in the year 1736, that the figure of the earth (or world) is not a *perfect sphere*, but an *oblate spheroid*.

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the world; the manner also in which the parts thereof are comprized, as it were, within the bosom of the heaven, and disposed in the most amazing harmony, sufficiently declare them produced by no casual confluence whatever, but made and appointed *by wisdom*, and *that* too of the highest excellence. For what degree of absurdity can induce the expectation of any thing so regularly constructed from chance, as to make a man believe, that by the power of chance the stones and wood will ever grow up together into the form of a house; or that chance will produce a poem from letters promiscuously thrown together; when even he, who saw some geometrical figures in the sand, declared them to be infallible traces of a human performance, from a full conviction that such things could not have arisen from an accidental cause. Then further, as *one* proof among others, that mankind did not *always* exist, but that there must have been some certain date of the common origin of our race, we may consider the progressive improvement of the arts, and the once uninhabited condition of those countries which began, at a subsequent period, to be peopled: and of this fact we have sufficient testimony from the languages which obtain in the respective islands, as they have gone over from the neighbouring continents. We may consider also, to the same purport, the certain institutions and customs which there are, so universally prevalent among all nations whatsoever, that we must not ascribe that prevalence to the instinct of nature, or the obvious conclusions of reason, so much as to the regular tradition of them from people to people, without any other than the rare and partial interruption which intentional wickedness or accidental misfortune may have occasioned: such was the custom, among the ancients, of the

the slaughter of victims in religious sacrifice; such also at the present day, is the modesty which prevails in respect to the intercourse of the sexes, such too is the ceremony of marriage; and the abhorrence from incestuous connexions.

## C H A P. VIII.

AGAINST THE OBJECTION IN RESPECT TO THE  
ORIGIN OF EVIL.

**T**HAT many evils do visibly arise, which, as God (according to what we have before observed) is a being of the most perfect goodness, cannot reasonably be said to have their origin from *him*, is by no means an argument which can fairly be allowed to set aside what has been asserted: for at the same time that we declared the Deity to be the cause of all things, we added, of *all things that do really and truly* subsist. Which does not, in the smallest degree, deny the possibility that those things in existence, may afterwards themselves become the causes of certain other effects (as actions are) contingent and eventual. God created man, and natures more exalted than man, with a power of free agency: now a power of free-agency is not *in itself* evil, but has a capacity, *of itself*, to produce evil. To imagine then that God can be the author of this class of evils, which we term *moral* evils, is indeed highly impious. But there are, likewise, evils, in another sense so called, inasmuch as they are productive of affliction or of loss to individuals, which, without impropriety, may be considered as proceeding

ing from God; designed, we may suppose, for the future amendment of the sufferer, or even as a punishment adapted to some past offence. In these there can be nothing inconsistent with *goodness*, nay frequently, like a nauseous medicine administered by a good phylician, from that very goodness those evils may proceed.

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## C H A P. IX.

THERE ARE NOT TWO ORIGINAL PRINCIPLES.

**B**UT here by the way, we must reject the position which some \* men have advanced, supposing the existence of two active principles (or prime causes) the one good, and the other evil. Competitors, indeed, may occasion the subversion, but never the establishment of order. Something, intrinsically *good*, there undoubtedly *is*; but, that something should in like manner *be* intrinsically and entirely *evil*, is by no means possible; for evil is a certain defect, which cannot be but in something in existence; and *that* very existence is already of the nature of *good*. §

\* The ancient disciples of Zoroaster, the Marcionites also, and the Manichæans (of these last see Pearson on the Creed, page 64, note †) are here alluded to.

§ This reasoning is not strictly close, it must be confessed; for we are here treating of *moral* good, but the refutation is grounded on existence, which is a *physical* good.

CHAP.



## C H A P. X.

THAT THE UNIVERSE IS GOVERNED BY GOD.

THE affectionate care displayed towards their offspring, not only by the human race, that is to say, by creatures of reason and understanding, but also by the whole animal creation in general, as well of birds as of beasts, under every denomination (for to them also there is a something given in the place of understanding) makes it fully apparent, that the universe is governed by the providence of God. Now this perfection, as it is a species of goodness, we can on no account withhold from God: more especially as he himself is omniscient and omnipotent, and, therefore cannot possibly be ignorant either of present or of future transactions; both of which, with infinite facility, himself is able to dispose and govern. To this place is applicable our former observation, on the \* motion of things, in contradiction to their innate properties, because of the appointed *universal* end.

## C H A P. XI.

SO LIKEWISE ARE THINGS SUBLUNARY.

THE great error of that opinion which confines this providence to the system of the heavens, is manifest, as well from the argument just now alleged, the force of which displays itself throughout all things that are made, as also from the appointed courses of the heavenly bodies; appointed,

\* See Chap. vii.

as the ablest philosophers avow, and as experience sufficiently demonstrates, *for the use of man*. Now it is but reasonable that the object, for the sake of which any thing is ordained, should receive more attention than the thing so ordained for the use of that object.

SO LIKEWISE ARE THINGS INDIVIDUAL.

NOR less erroneous is that opinion, which admits a general, but not a particular, providence. For if, as some profess to do, we make the Deity ignorant of things individual, the very Deity will be ignorant of himself. Neither will his knowledge be *infinite*, as we have already determined it to be, if it be not extended to every particular.—Now if God hath a knowledge of those particulars, why may not he also have a providence over them? Especially since even every thing individual, considered as such, is appointed for a certain end, as well peculiar as universal? and since also the very kinds (or things in general) which these writers themselves allow to be objects of the Divine care, subsist only *in* individuals; so that if the individuals can perish, totally renounced by the providence of God, so also those kinds (or things in general) may in like manner perish.

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## C H A P. XII.

THE PRESERVATION OF EMPIRES A PROOF OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

THE preservation of states is equally acknowledged by philosophers and historians to be no inconsiderable proof of the Divine Providence over human

human affairs. And this, in the first place, *generally*; from the constant continuance of that regulation, wheresoever it is once established, which teaches command on the one hand, and obedience on the other: often also, in the second place, *especially*; from the long duration of this or that particular form of government, which is seen to obtain for many ages together: the monarchy, for instance, of the Assyrians, the Egyptians, and the Franks; the aristocracy of Venice. Something, it is true, might be done to this effect, by the sole power of human wisdom; yet, if we properly consider the multitude of wicked and evil-minded men (which every state contains *within itself*) the dangers also to which it is liable *from without*; and the vicissitudes which are, as it were, *inseparably annexed* to the affairs of men, it seems impossible that any empire should subsist so long, but by the peculiar protection of the Divine Being. Still more visibly doth this appear, wheresoever it hath pleased the Deity to bring about the *revolutions* of empires. For to the instruments he then makes use of, to accomplish his destined purpose (such instruments were Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar the Dictator, Zingis Khan among the Tartars, Namcaa among the Chinese) success, far above the measure which is generally given by the various fortune of all human events, outruns their very wishes. And is not then this wonderful similiarity of circumstances, this general conspiracy, as it were, to one appointed end, a certain token of a directing Providence? *Chance*, indeed, may several times produce the highest cast of the dice; but if the same throw be an hundred times repeated, no man will scruple to pronounce it the effect of *art*.

## C H A P. XIII.

## PROOF ALSO DERIVED FROM MIRACLES.

**T**HE strongest testimony, however, of a Divine Providence, is given us in the miracles and prophecies recorded in history. Fabulous, indeed, are many of the accounts we read; but we are not therefore to reject as impossible the facts which are attested by men of competent authority in their respective ages: that is to say, by men whose ability and integrity are equally unsuspected. For what impediment can a God *omnipotent* receive, that he should not declare his knowledge, or enforce his will, by means independent of the laws, and foreign to the common operations, of nature; since *that* nature is by him ordained, in just subjection to the hand which made it?—Now some men may assert, that things of this kind may have been effected even by beings inferior to God:—the truth of the assertion shall be granted; but does not this very circumstance prepare the way for a belief, still *more* implicit, that God can effect them also? Besides, when the actions of those beings are such, we must either esteem them the actions of God *through their means* performed, or *to them* in his wisdom permitted; since in every well-constituted government, the settled limits of the laws can never be transgressed, unless by the sanction and authority of the supreme ruler.

## C H A P. XIV.

**AMONG THE JEWS ESPECIALLY! WHO HAVE AN ADDITIONAL CLAIM TO OUR BELIEF, FROM THE DURATION OF THEIR RELIGION.**

**B**UT however we may question the fidelity of other histories, the religion even of the Jews alone



alone may easily convince us, that miracles are sometimes *in reality* observable. The Jewish religion, long since deprived of every human aid, nay exposed to contempt and derision through almost all the countries of the known world, *endureth to this day*: whereas all other religions (Christianity excepted, which is, as it were, the perfection of the Jewish) have either entirely vanished, and, like the Pagan, have *themselves* completely lost all power and authority, as empires; or, like the Mahometan, by dint of that same imperial power, they are still kept up, and *forcibly* continued. And now, should it be enquired, from what cause it ariseth, that Judaism should have taken such deep root in the minds of all the Hebrews, that it cannot possibly be eradicated, none other can be assigned or imagined, than that the present generation should have received from the last, as *that* did from the preceding, and so backward till we come to that which lived in the days of Moses and of Joshua, by sure and constant tradition, those miracles which were wrought for them in divers places; but especially in the *Exodus* itself, and in the journey from Egypt, and in the entrance into Canaan: miracles, whereof those very forefathers were themselves witnesses.—It is, moreover, incredible, that any other means could possibly have prevailed upon a nation, haughty and rebellious by nature, to take upon themselves a law, so laden with oppressive ceremonials: or that men of sense and understanding, out of the many distinctions which might have been devised for their religion, should select the *token*\* of circumcision;—a token, which could not be received without excessive pain; a certain object, at the same time, of ridicule from every other people; and, in short, without a single recommendation, save that of its divine origin.

\* Gen. Chap. xvii. verse 12.

## C H A P. XV.

FROM THE VERACITY AND ANTIQUITY OF MOSES.

THE writings of Moses, which record the miracles we have mentioned, have the fullest claim to our belief; not only from the uninterrupted tradition subsisting among the Hebrews, that the author himself was recommended and appointed to the people as a leader by the voice of the Lord; but also from the certain proofs which he afforded, that no selfish motive of ambition, no partial views of benefit to his family, could have actuated his conduct, that himself should have recorded, when he might have suppressed, his own faults and follies; and, while his own descendants are reduced to a level with the common Levites, that he should have assigned to *others* the dignity of the government and of the priesthood.—Hence, then, it must appear most plainly, that he could have no inducement to recite a falsity: neither are the stile and language he makes use of, by any means such as are in general practised to gain credit to impostures, highly coloured and alluring; but simple and well adapted to the nature of the occasion. An additional claim to our belief in the writings of Moses, arises from their undoubted antiquity; a point, which none other writing whatever can dispute with them. Of this we have evidence from the Greeks, from whom other nations derived all learning, when they confess themselves to have received certain letters of their language *from some other*; which letters among them have the same order, the same name, and even the same old character with the Syriac or Hebrew. In like manner do the most ancient laws of Athens, whence also the Roman were afterwards selected, derive their origin from the laws of Moses.

C H A P.

## C H A P. XVI.

FROM THE TESTIMONIES OF FOREIGN WRITERS.

THE testimonies, moreover, of men, who differed altogether in religion from the Jews, may, in no inconsiderable number, be adduced to shew, that the very earliest traditions prevailing among all nations whatsoever, corresponded with the writings of Moses. The accounts left by that writer, in respect to the origin of the world, were also nearly the same in the oldest histories of the Phœnicians, collected by Sanchuniathon, and from him translated by Philo Byblius: partly also in those of the Indians and Egyptians; whence Linus, Hesiod, and many other Greeks, have made mention of a *chaos*, which others, again, have signified under the denomination of an *egg*. Very many writers, and, last of all, Ovid, who took it from the Greeks, have frequently treated of the formation of animals, and lastly of that of man, even after the Divine Likeness; as also, of the dominion which was given to man over all other animals. That all things were made by the word of God, is declared even by Epicharmus and the Platonists; and before their time, by that most ancient poet, who was the author, not of those hymns which are extant in that name, but of those verses to which antiquity hath given the appellation of the *Carmen Orphicum*, not as being the composition, but as containing the traditions of Orpheus. That the Sun is not a primitive and original light, but only a receptacle of light (the Receiver and the Vehicle of Fire as an ancient Christian writer expresseth it) was even asserted by Empedocles: Aratus and Catullus pronounced the Divine habitation to be higher than  
the

the stars; and that therein is Light Perpetual we are taught by Homer. That before all things were, God *is*, as not being begotten of any; that the world is of beauty unparallelled, as being the work of God; and that darkness was prior to light, we are instructed by Thales, according to the ancient doctrine: the last article indeed, we even find mentioned in the Orphic verses, and in Hesiod; and thence the computation of time by nights was adopted by nations the most tenacious of old customs. Anaxagoras declares that all things were ordained by a *supreme mind*: Aratus, that the heavenly bodies were made by the Deity: Virgil, after the Greeks, that life proceeded from Divine Inspiration: Hesiod, Homer, and Callimachus, that man was formed from clay: and finally, it is asserted by Maximus Tyrius to be a tradition unanimously and universally accepted, that there is One Supreme God, the cause of all things. The completion of the work within seven days, was a circumstance recorded not only among the people of Greece and Italy, in the particular observance of the seventh day, as we learn from Josephus, from Philo, from Tibullus, from Clemens Alexandrinus, and from Lucian (while at the same time the Hebrew observance of it is universally well known) but also among the Celtæ and the Indians, who all established an hebdomadal or weekly division of time; as appears from Philostratus, from Dion Cassius, from Justin Martyr, as well as from the oldest periodical distinctions. We are even told by the Egyptians, that the primitive state of man was a state of simplicity and of nakedness: and hence arose the golden age of the poets, which according to Strabo, was celebrated even among the Indians. Maimonides hath remarked, that the accounts of Adam, of Eve, of the tree and of the serpent, were in his time  
extant



stant among the idolatrous Indians; and modern writers affirm also, that the same accounts are found among the inhabitants of Pegu, and the Calamintians\*, a Pagan people of the same Indies: the name of Adam is also found among the Brachmans, and the computation of 6000 years from the foundation of the world, is made by the Siamese. The ages of men immediately succeeding the first are recorded by Berosus of the Chaldeans, Manethos of the Egyptians, Hiromus of the Phoenicians, Hestius, Hecatæus, and Hellanicus of the Greeks, and by Hesiod among the poets, nearly to have reached 1000 years. Now this is the less incredible, since various historians, and particularly the Grecian Pausanias and Philostratus, and the Roman Pliny, have recorded, that the bodies of men in former times have been found, when their sepulchres were opened, to be of much larger size than those of modern days. Then again, it is related by Catullus, after many Grecian writers, that visions from heaven appeared occasionally unto men, before the frequency and greatness of their crimes had as it were excluded the Deity, and the spirits which minister unto Him, from all familiar intercourse with mankind. The savage state of giants, as mentioned by Moses, is almost universally spoken of by the Greek and Latin authors. Of the deluge it is observable, that the memory of man, in almost all countries, terminates in the history of that event: even in those countries which, after having long been totally unknown, were opened to the knowledge of the present day, by our more immediate predecessors: Whence Varro calls the whole of that period the dark or unknown Age. Poets, it is true, in

\* Inhabitants of the Philippine islands.

the right and freedom of fabulous representation, have greatly involved their accounts in obscurity: those accounts, however, were originally given upon authentic grounds; that is to say, agreeably to the Mosaic relation of them, by writers of the greatest antiquity: such were Berosus of the Chaldeans, Abydenus of the Assyrians, who even mentions the dove which was sent forth, as doth also Plutarch of the Greeks: such too was Lucian, who reports, that at Hierapolis in Syria, a very ancient history of the ark was extant, together with an account not only of the chosen persons who were thereby preserved, but also of the rest of the animals. The same history was likewise extant according to Molo and Nicolaus Damascenus. The latter indeed expressly mentions the word *ark*, which also, according to Apollodorus, is met with in the history of Deucalion.—It is further testified by many Spanish authors, that some traditional remembrance of the deluge, and of the animals preserved, nay even of the raven and the dove, obtains in parts of America, as in Cuba, in Mechoacan, in Nicaragua: of the deluge itself also, in that part which is now called Castilla del Oro, or the Golden Castile. Even the observation of Pliny, that Joppa was built before the flood, is declaratory of the parts of the earth inhabited before that event. The place where the ark rested, is shewn, by the uniform testimony of the Armenians from the earliest ages to the present day, to have been on the Gordiæan mountains. *Japhet*, from whom Europe was peopled, and from that word *Ion*, or, as it was formerly pronounced *Javon*, of the Greeks, and Hammon of the Africans, are names which appear also in the Mosaic history; and farther vestiges of ancient names are noticed by Josephus and others, in national and local etymologies. What poet hath not recorded

tion, recorded the attempt to scale heaven? The destruc-  
 tion of Sodom by fire is related by Diodorus Siculus,  
 Strabo, by Tacitus, by Pliny, by Solinus. The  
 antiquity of the custom of circumcision has been  
 attested by Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo, and Philo-  
 stratus: it is attested, to this day, by the nations  
 descended from Abraham: not only by the Hebrews,  
 but by the Idumæans, the Ishmærites and others.  
 The accounts of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and of Jo-  
 seph, agreeing with the Mosaic, were formerly ex-  
 tant in Philo Byblius, taken from Sanchuniathon;  
 Berosus, Hecataeus, Damascenus, Artapanus,  
 Eusebius, Demetrius, and partly also in that very  
 ancient author who composed the Orphic verses.  
 Some account of them is even now extant in Justin,  
 taken from Trogu Pompeius. Moses himself and  
 his actions, are recorded by almost all those writers.  
 His preservation from the water, and his receipt of  
 the two tables from God, are expressly mentioned in  
 the Orphic verses. To these we may add what is  
 said by Polemon, and frequent passages relative to  
 the departure from Ægypt, which are contained in  
 the Ægyptian writers, Manethon, Lyfimachus,  
 Hieronymus. Moreover, it is wholly inconsistent  
 with reason to believe, that Moses, hated as he was  
 not only by the Ægyptians, but also by many other  
 nations, by the Idumæans, for example, the Arabs,  
 the Phœnicians, should have dared publicly to offer  
 an account of the creation of the world, and of mat-  
 ters of the highest antiquity, when that account  
 might either have been refuted by others preceding,  
 or at least would have had to combat with long-  
 established and general prejudices; or, again, that he  
 could have ventured to send forth a representation  
 of the events of *his own* time, when that representa-  
 tion might have been instantly contradicted by many  
 living

*living witnesses.* Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Pliny, Tacitus, and after them Dionysius Longinus on the sublime, have all made mention of Moses: Pliny also and Apuleius, as well as the Talmudists, speak of Jannes and of Mambres, who made\* a stand against Moses in Ægypt. In some places, but more especially among the Pythagoreans, we find parts of the very laws and ceremonies extant which were appointed by Moses. Proofs so signal are exhibited by Strabo and by Justin, from Trogus, as well of the religion as of the moral justice of the ancient Jews, that it now indeed were needless to adduce the passages which either are or have been discovered, in reference to Joshua and others, correspondent with the Hebrew accounts; for whosoever hath that firm belief in Moses, which without the greatest indecency cannot possibly be withholden from him, must acknowledge, from the fullest conviction, that "nobler works were done" by the Almighty in the times of old. And this it is the main object of our present argument to prove. The miracles of a later date, those for instance, of Elias, of Elisha, and of others, ought so much the less to be thought liable to suspicion, because in their days, Judæa was become a country of much greater note, and was more over rendered, by its difference in religion, an object of jealous hatred to all its neighbours; so that *they* with the greatest ease might have stopped the progress of any spreading imposture. The account of Jonas who was three days in the whale's belly, is given by Lycophron and by Æneas Gazæus; admitting the substitution of the name of Hercules; to whose celebrity it was usual, as Tacitus hath remarked, to at-

\* See Exod. c. vii. ver. 11.---"Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses," &c. 2 Tim. c. iii. ver. 8.



tribute generally all great exploits. Julian himself who was no less an enemy of the Jews than of the Christians, hath actually, by dint of historical evidence, been forced into conviction and confession, that men of divine inspiration did certainly once exist among the Jews; and that fire from heaven did really descend upon the sacrifices of Moses and Elias. And here, indeed, it must be observed, that not only heavy penalties were instituted, among the Hebrews, for them who should presume falsely to assert to themselves the gift of prophecy; but further, that many kings, who might have established and secured their authority thereby, many of the wisest men also, as Esdras and others were, would never dare to arrogate a title to that honourable function. Neither was it once claimed by any person whatsoever for some ages before Jesus. Much less was it possible that so many thousand persons should be imposed upon by the asseveration of that strange, and as it were continual and public sign, the oracular judgment (of the Urim and Thummim) which shone forth perpetually from the breast-plate of the high priest: the duration of which sign until the destruction of the first temple, is always so entirely credited by all the Jews, that it is absolutely necessary that their forefathers *must* have been convinced of the undoubted certainty of the fact.

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## C H A P. XVII.

### THE SAME PROVED FROM PROPHECIES.

ANOTHER argument, nearly allied to that of miracles, nor less conclusive of Divine Providence, arises from that prophetic declaration of  
D future

living witnesses. Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Pliny, Tacitus, and after them Dionysius Longinus on the sublime, have all made mention of Moses: Pliny also and Apuleius, as well as the Talmudists, speak of Jamnes and of Mambres, who made\* a stand against Moses in Ægypt. In some places, but more especially among the Pythagoreans, we find parts of the very laws and ceremonies extant which were appointed by Moses. Proofs so signal are exhibited by Strabo and by Justin, from Trogus, as well of the religion as of the moral justice of the ancient Jews, that it now indeed were needless to adduce the passages which either are or have been discovered, in reference to Joshua and others, correspondent with the Hebrew accounts; for whosoever hath that firm belief in Moses, which without the greatest indecency cannot possibly be withholden from him, must acknowledge, from the fullest conviction, that " noble works were done" by the Almighty in the times of old. And this it is the main object of our present argument to prove. The miracles of a later date, those for instance, of Elias, of Elisha, and of others, ought so much the less to be thought liable to suspicion, because in their days, Judæa was become a country of much greater note, and was more over rendered, by its difference in religion, an object of jealous hatred to all its neighbours; so that *they* with the greatest ease might have stopped the progress of any spreading imposture. The account of Jonas who was three days in the whale's belly, is given by Lycophron and by Æneas Gazæus; admitting the substitution of the name of Hercules; to whose celebrity it was usual, as Tacitus hath remarked, to at-

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tribute generally all great exploits. Julian himself who was no less an enemy of the Jews than of the Christians, hath actually, by dint of historical evidence, been forced into conviction and confession, that men of divine inspiration did certainly once exist among the Jews; and that fire from heaven did really descend upon the sacrifices of Moses and Elias. And here, indeed, it must be observed, that not only heavy penalties were instituted, among the Hebrews, for them who should presume falsely to assert to themselves the gift of prophecy; but further, that many kings, who might have established and secured their authority thereby, many of the wisest men also, as Esdras and others were, would never dare to arrogate a title to that honourable function. Neither was it once claimed by any person whatsoever for some ages before Jesus. Much less was it possible that so many thousand persons should be imposed upon by the asseveration of that strange, and as it were continual and public sign, the oracular judgment (of the Urim and Thummim) which shone forth perpetually from the breast-plate of the high priest: the duration of which sign until the destruction of the first temple, is always so entirely credited by all the Jews, that it is absolutely necessary that their forefathers *must* have been convinced of the undoubted certainty of the fact.

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## C H A P. XVII.

### THE SAME PROVED FROM PROPHECIES.

ANOTHER argument, nearly allied to that of miracles, nor less conclusive of Divine Providence, arises from that prophetic declaration of

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future

future events, which is seen so repeatedly and so manifestly verified among the Hebrews. Such was the prediction which declared, that he who should rebuild Jericho, should become childless. Such too was that of the destruction of the temple of Bethel by a king, and that king expressly named Josiah, above 300 years before the actual event. Such again was that, by Isaiah, of the very name and principal actions of Cyrus, circumstantially foretold: that, likewise, by Jeremiah, of the issue of the siege carried on by the Chaldeans against Jerusalem: the translation of the empire from the Assyrians to the Medes and Persians, and from them to Alexander of Macedonia, a part\* of whose empire should afterwards be divided between the Lagidæ and the Seleucidæ: the ill-treatment also which the Hebrews were to experience from all these kings, and especially from the famous Antiochus, were facts so plainly predicted by Daniel, that Porphyrius, who compared the Grecian accounts extant in his time, with those predictions, was unable to invent any other subterfuge, than that of saying, that the prophecies ascribed to Daniel, were written *after* the events; which is in fact the same as if a man should say, that those works which bear the name, and which have always been attributed to the hand of Virgil, were *not* written by Virgil himself in the Augustan age: for the matter we are speaking of, has never been any more a point of doubt among the Jews, than *that* was among the Romans. To these we may add, the very numerous and striking prophecies among the people of Mexico and Peru, relative to the arrival of the Spaniards.

\* *Ex parte only* (says Grotius); for the Macedonian empire was divided into four kingdoms. But the kings of the south, i. e. of Egypt, and the kings of the north, i. e. of Syria, are alone mentioned here, as they alone were concerned with the Jews.



in those countries, and to the calamities which were  
thence to follow.

FROM OTHER ARGUMENTS.

HITHER also may be referred (in confirmation of  
our assertion) the dreams which, not unfrequently,  
have happened to men, corresponding with subse-  
quent events, which, either in themselves or in their  
causes, could never possibly have been known to the  
persons who experienced them, corresponding, I  
say, with such exactness, that no moderate degree of  
impudence would be requisite to refer them either  
to chance or to natural causes. Tertullian, in his  
book *De Anima*, has collected some remarkable in-  
stances of this sort from writers of the highest emi-  
nence. The same may be said of apparitions, which  
not only have been *seen*, but also have been *heard to*  
*speak*; if we may credit the relations given us by a  
class of historians, very far removed from every im-  
pulse and effect of superstitious credulity; as also the  
testimonies of men of modern times, as well in China  
as in Mexico and other parts of America. Neither  
ought we to despise those public trials of innocence,  
by ordeal fire, which so many of the German nations  
have not only mentioned in their histories, but actu-  
ally established by their laws.

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C H A P. XVIII.

IN ANSWER TO THE OBJECTION, THAT MIRACLES  
ARE NOT NOW SEEN.

NO just objection can possibly be grounded on the  
observation, that miracles and predictions of  
this nature are in the present times never known to  
happen.

happen. That they were so formerly, is amply demonstrative of a Divine Providence. And this point being once established, it becomes incumbent upon us, of necessity, to believe that the Deity hath now entirely discontinued them, on the same principles of providence and wisdom, whereon in former days he frequently made use of them. Those laws which institute throughout the universe a course of natural, and yet an uncertainty of future events, could never, with reason, be lightly or continually transgressed. That only was at length to be allowed, when the occasion was of moment sufficient to warrant the transgression. Such was the period in which the worship of the true God, cast out as it was from almost all the world, was yet remaining in one corner of the earth, that is, in Judea; and new bulwarks of defence became thereupon continually requisite, to secure it against the impiety wherewith it was encompassed and besieged. Such too was the period in which the Christian religion, (whereof we shall presently proceed in particular to treat) was first commanded, by Divine Will, to be published abroad throughout all nations under heaven.

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## C H A P. XIX.

AND THAT EVIL IS SUFFERED TO ABOUND SO  
EXCEEDINGLY.

**A**NOTHER observation, which is apt, in some men, to create a doubt of the Divine Providence, is that of the excessive wickedness, whereof a deluge as it were overwhelmeth the whole world.  
This

This (say they) it would be the particular business of  
 Divine Providence, if any such existed, to correct  
 and to repress. Easy and obvious is the answer; for  
 how could it possibly have been consistent with equity,  
 that God, after he had created man an agent equally  
 at liberty to do good and to do evil, should still have  
 taken any step for the prevention of evil actions, in  
 contradiction to that liberty? This, I say, allowing  
 the evidently-necessary and immutable attribute of  
 goodness, which is solely reserved to the Divine Be-  
 ing, was utterly impossible. No methods, however,  
 of prevention, which can be made use of without  
 counteracting that allowed liberty, are left unessayed  
 by the Almighty; such as the institution and promul-  
 gation of *law*, the means of admonition internal and  
 external, the language of menaces even, and of pro-  
 mises; neither doth he suffer the designs of man to  
 reach that extensive and extravagant degree of wick-  
 edness to which they otherwise might rise. And to  
 this it hath been owing, that the system of authority  
 and government hath never undergone a *total* sub-  
 version; neither hath it ever been possible to blot out  
 entirely all knowledge of the Divine Laws. Besides,  
 the very *evil* which some are suffered to commit, fail-  
 eth not sometimes to bring forth *good*: when it is ap-  
 plied (as hath been said, when we touched upon this  
 subject) that others in an equal state of wickedness  
 may be thereby punished; that they who have swer-  
 ved and fallen from the path of virtue, may be there-  
 by reclaimed and re-instated; or that the virtuous  
 proficients in that path may thereby be called upon  
 to signalize their patience and their constancy. In-  
 fine, it is generally the fate of those very men them-  
 selves, whose iniquities appear disregarded for a sea-  
 son, to answer, with accumulated interest, the debt  
 of their suspended punishments, that *they* finally may

tremble at the execution, who have long triumphed in the transgression, of the Divine Will.

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## C H A P. XX, XXI.

THE FREQUENT AFFLICTIONS OF GOOD MEN, AFFORD NO ARGUMENT AGAINST A PROVIDENCE; BUT ARE THEMSELVES RETORTED UPON OUR OPPONENTS, TO PROVE A FUTURE STATE.

**B**UT if it be observable that wickedness occasionally escapes without punishment, and that good men are sometimes (to the great offence of many weak-minded persons) so cruelly oppressed and injured by the wicked, that they not only pass their whole lives in misery, but even end them often by untimely, and perhaps disgraceful deaths; yet we are not, therefore hastily to exclude the providence of God from the affairs of man, when the existence of that providence over them is proved, as we have already declared by such convincing arguments; rather ought we to collect, as the wisest men have done, that,

### (C H A P. XXI.)

**SINCE** the Deity doth certainly regard human actions; since justice is his attribute; and since notwithstanding, the facts above mentioned are undeniable; we may well expect after this life that day of account and retribution *will* arrive, that neither notorious vice may remain unpunished, nor illustrious virtue unnoticed, unrewarded.



## C H A P. XXII.

AND THIS ASSERTION IS CONFIRMED BY TRADITION.

It is requisite, in order to establish the foregoing argument, to establish likewise our position, That the soul survives the body. Now this is a tradition of the highest antiquity, gradually descended from our first parents (for whence can it otherwise have been derived?) to almost every civilized people under heaven. This appears from Homer, and from the philosophers not only of Greece, but from those also (the Druids) of ancient Gaul, and from the Indian Bramins: as well as from the accounts given us by many writers, of the Ægyptians, the Thracians, and likewise of the Germans.

Moreover we observe, from various instances, that the notion also of Divine judgment after death, obtained very generally; not among the Greeks *alone*, but likewise, as Strabo, Diogenes, Laertius, and Plutarch inform us, among the Ægyptians and the Indians. Add to this, the tradition found of old, in the writings of Hytaspes and the Sybills, and now also in Ovid, in Lucan, and among the Siamese Indians, importing the destruction of the universe by a general conflagration. Astrologers establish this idea, by their observation of the nearer approaches of the sun to the earth\*.

It should further be remarked, that the same opinion respecting the future existence of the soul, as well as on the subject of a future judgment, was even found among the natives, by the first discoverers

\* I do not presume to enter fully on the subject; but it is impossible to pass over this argument without observing, that even if the theory had been true, the conclusion would not be very evident.

of the Canary islands, of America, and of other remote parts.

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C H A P. XXIII.

NO REASON IN OBJECTION TO IT.

NO argument can possibly be drawn from nature, to refute this tradition, so anciently, so generally received. The dissolution of all those things which are seen to perish, is occasioned by one of the three following causes: By the opposition of a contrary and more powerful nature; as cold is destroyed by any great degree of heat: by the subtraction of that, whereon a thing dependeth; as the size of a glass, when the glass is broken; by the defect of the efficient cause; as light, when the sun disappeareth. Now none of these causes can be said to affect the mind (or soul). The first cannot, because it is impossible that any thing *can* be named, of a nature contrary to that of the mind. Nay it is the peculiar nature of the mind to receive into itself after its own proper, i. e. intellectual manner, the most absolute contrarieties, in the same proportion, and at the same time.—The second cannot, because the nature of the mind is altogether independent. If it had depended upon any thing, it had been upon the human body: but *that* is plainly not the case, for while the powers of the body are wearied by action, the faculties of the mind alone receive no weariness therefrom: so again, the bodily powers are injured by a too great excellence in the object presented to them; as the sight of the eye by the rays of the sun: the

the mental powers, on the other hand, the higher they direct their operation, as in the contemplation of abstracted and general subjects or ideas, the nearer they approach to perfection. The objects of attention and employment which engage the corporeal powers, are, like the nature of the body itself, of finite duration and space: but those objects, to which the mental faculties extend, are infinite and eternal. The operations of the mind then are clearly independent of the body; and equally independent we may thence conclude the nature of it; for the nature of things invisible can alone be collected from their operations.—The third cause of dissolution, is so, in the present question, inadmissible. No efficient cause, no constant source of the mind, can possibly be named. We cannot consider it as constantly proceeding from the parents, because the children usually survive them. If, however, we must have an efficient cause and source of the mind, it can be none other than that original and universal cause, which, in respect of *power*, doth never fail. That should fail in respect of *will*, that is to say, that should will the dissolution of our spiritual nature, is a point altogether incapable of any proof whatsoever.

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## C H A P. XXIV.

### MANY ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF IT.

TO justify, rather, the *reverse* of that opinion, considerable arguments may fairly be adduced. We must allow that absolute free-agency permitted unto man, that “longing after immortality,”  
implanted

implanted in his nature; that force of conscience which he feels, affording on the one hand, internal consolation for every upright, however irksome, action, and supporting itself with a kind of future hope; but stinging and tormenting itself, on the other hand, for every *evil* action; especially on the approach of death, as through a sensible apprehension of impending judgment. To stifle that instinctive force, we see, from various examples, how frequently and how fruitlessly exerted the power of the most abandoned tyrants hath been, although their utmost wishes, as well as their utmost endeavours, have conspired to attain that end.

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## C H A P. XXV.

THE ULTIMATE DESIGN OF MAN MUST CONSEQUENTLY  
BE HIS FUTURE FELICITY.

THE nature of the soul, then, being such as to exclude, of itself, all cause of dissolution; and God, at the same time, having given us to understand, by various intimations of his gracious will, that the soul shall survive the body; the ultimate design of man can never be more worthily directed than to the attainment of felicity in that future state. This it is, which Plato and the Pythagoreans expressed in their assertion, that the happiness of man consists in his becoming as like, as possible, to the Deity. What that happiness may be, and how it may be attained, it is possible, indeed, for *human conjecture* to investigate, but wherever we can gain from *Divine Revelation* any assistance in the search, it is incumbent on us to receive that assistance, as absolutely and certainly infallible.

C H A P.



## C H A P. XXVI.

WE MUST SEARCH OUT THE TRUE RELIGION, IN ORDER TO ATTAIN THAT FUTURE FELICITY.

AS the Christian Religion doth promise, above others, to obtain for us the end proposed, it shall be considered and duly examined, in the second part of this work, how far we may depend upon the truth and certainty of that religion.

## B O O K   T H E   S E C O N D.

## C H A P. I.

THE TITLE OF THE TRUE RELIGION IS JUSTLY APPLIED TO THAT OF CHRIST.

THE purport of this second book, then, it must be observed, is not to canvass, severally, the particular tenets of Christianity; but only in general to prove the superior truth and singular authority of the Christian Religion itself; And this, with hearty supplications unto Christ, who now sitteth on the throne of Heaven, that he will graciously enable us, by a fit portion of his Holy Spirit, duly to discharge so great an undertaking, we proceed, as follows, to demonstrate.

C H A P.

## CHAP. II.

TO PROVE THAT SUCH A PERSON AS JESUS WAS  
ONCE LIVING UPON EARTH.

**T**HAT Jesus of Nazareth was formerly living in Judæa, in the reign of Tiberius the Roman Emperor, is uniformly and invariably declared to be a fact, not only by the Christians in every country under heaven, but also by the Jews universally; as well by the present generation of them, as by the writers among them, ever since the period to which we refer; Pagan authors, at the same time, that is to say, authors, who were neither of the Jewish or of the Christian persuasion, such as Suetonius, Tacitus, the younger Pliny, and many others after them, unite in attestation of the same undeniable truth.

THE SAME JESUS UNDERWENT AN IGNOMINIOUS  
DEATH.

**T**HAT the same Jesus did suffer and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, the Procurator of Judæa, is, in like manner, acknowledged by all Christians whatsoever, notwithstanding the disgraceful reflections which they, as the worshippers of such a Lord, might bring upon themselves. This also do the Jews acknowledge; conscious as they must at the same time feel, that all the odium and extreme resentment which they experience from the Christians, under whose dominion they universally dwell, may be chiefly ascribed to this very circumstance, the obstinate demand of their importunate ancestors, whereby Pilate was compelled to pronounce the fatal sentence. The Pagan writers abovementioned, have recorded the

the same sad event ; and it was, further, expressly made apparent by the "Acta Pilati" which were extant for a long time after, and to which the Christians were accustomed occasionally to appeal. Julian and other enemies of Christianity never dared to call in question the authenticity of this fact (the ignominious death of Jesus) and consequently no history can possibly stand upon more certain grounds than this does, as having been attested and allowed, I will not say by the concurrent evidence of jarring individuals alone, but of contending nations. In spite of all dissensions, we perceive however, that the widest extremities of the world unite, with adoration, in the full acknowledgement, that the same Jesus is the Lord.

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### C H A P. III.

NEVERTHELESS, HE WAS WORSHIPPED AFTER DEATH, BY MEN OF THE MOST ENLIGHTENED UNDERSTANDINGS.

THE worshipping of Jesus is not an institution of modern or of latter times alone, but may be traced backward to that early period immediately subsequent to that of his crucifixion. In the reign of Nero, for example, as it is attested by Tacitus and others, the professors of the Christian worship were frequently condemned, for that sole cause, to sufferings, to torture, and to death.

## C H A P. IV.

WHICH CAN ONLY BE ACCOUNTED FOR BY THE  
MIRACLES WHICH HE WROUGHT.

**A**MONG the worshippers of Christ, there were always many to be found, who possessed a good share of natural abilities and judgment, and a competent degree of acquired learning. Such, for example, (to say nothing of the Jews in this particular) we may consider Sergius the Deputy of Cyprus, Dionysius the Areopagite, Polycarpus, Justin, Irenæus, Athenagoras, Origenes, Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, and others. When we perceive therefore, that men, like these, who for the most part acted in despite of all the bias and strong prejudice of education; who at the same time were not tempted to espouse the cause of Christianity by any prospect whatsoever of advantage or of honour; when we perceive, I say, that men, like these, became the voluntary and devoted worshippers of One who suffered a disgraceful death, it is totally impossible to ascribe their conduct to any other motive, than the certain discovery, which a diligent inquiry, suitable at once to the wisdom of the men and to the importance of the subject, had enabled them to make, that "the fame of his miracles which had gone forth into all the countries round about," was truly, faithfully, and undeniably attested. Thus attested were the cures which he wrought by his word alone, and that too before all the people, in grievous and inveterate diseases; the gift of sight to him who had been born blind; the increase of the loaves, which he more than once commanded, so



that many thousands, who could all bear witness of it, 'did eat and were filled;' the restoration of the dead to life; and many other acts of equal admiration, and of equal truth.

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## C H A P. V.

WHICH MIRACLES CANNOT POSSIBLY BE ASCRIBED  
TO ANY NATURAL OR INFERNAL AGENCY, BUT  
MUST HAVE PROCEEDED. ALTOGETHER FROM  
GOD.

SO surely and undoubtedly established was the fame of the miracles of Jesus, that Celsus and Julian, when they wrote against the Christians, have, neither of them, dared to *deny* that he *sometimes* exerted a miraculous power, while the Hebrews expressly *allow* it in their books of the Thalmud\*. The very appellation of prodigies and miracles which is given to the facts above-mentioned, is a sufficient proof that they were not wrought by any natural effect; neither is it possible that any natural effect should utterly remove the most inveterate diseases, and that too in an instant, by the sole power of the voice or of the touch. Besides if it had been possible by any means whatever, to have ascribed those works to the regular agency of nature, that surely

\* The Thalmud (which the Jews call the Cabala, *i. e.* the doctrine received by tradition) consists of two parts. One, called the Misnah, is the text of the Thalmud, or traditions; containing the opinions, rites, and ceremonies of the Jews: Another, named Gemara, is a supplemental comment or mystical exposition of the law. There are two Thalmuds; one published at Jerusalem about the year of Christ 300; another at Babylon about the year of Christ 500.

would have been done many ages ago, as well by the professed enemies of Christ in person, as by the enemies of his gospel. Upon the same principle we find it equally impossible, to consider them as tricks and impostures; as they were, for the most part, openly performed, when (according to St. Luke) "innumerable multitudes of people were gathered together" to behold them; and many in those multitudes, were men of sense and information, ill-affected towards Christ, and closely watching him in every action. It should, further, be remembered, that he *repeatedly* performed many miracles of the same nature; neither were the effects produced by them momentary, but permanent. After a due consideration of all these circumstances, the obvious conclusion follows as the Jews themselves acknowledge, that some supernatural power, that is to say, some *good* or *evil* spirit, must have been the cause from which those effects proceeded. That they proceeded not from any *evil* spirit is clearly proved, because this very doctrine of Christ, which those miracles were employed to establish, militates directly *against* evil spirits; expressly prohibiting the worship of them, and restraining all men from every impurity and wickedness, in which such spirits take delight. This again is still further proved by the actual and consequent effects of this doctrine; for, wherever it was received, we find immediately that the worshipping of spirits, and the exercise of "curious arts" fell away together; the worship of one God was introduced; all spirits were holden in abomination; and by the coming of Christ, as Porphyrius himself hath acknowledged, the whole power of them was broken and destroyed. Now, it is utterly incredible that any evil spirit should be so impolitic and absurd, as to work repeatedly those acts  
of

of power, which brought, in no single instance, any honour or advantage to itself, but on the contrary, the utmost disadvantage and disgrace. It is at the same time, wholly incompatible with the wisdom and the goodness of God himself that we should believe him capable of suffering the efforts of devilish deceit and subtilty to be practised with success upon a set of men, acting (as the primitive disciples of Christ undoubtedly were known to act, from the blameless tenor of their lives, and from the many calamities which for conscience sake they underwent) in utter abhorrence of all evil ways, and living in the service of that very God with fear. But if, on the other hand, we ascribe the miracles of Christ to the agency of virtuous Beings, virtuous indeed, but still subordinate to God, we therein immediately admit that those works were pleasing to the Supreme Being, and conducive to his honor; since virtuous Beings can never act otherwise than in conformity with his good pleasure, and for the advancement of his glory. It would here, then, be needless to observe, that the miracles which Christ performed, (the revival of the dead, for instance, which he more than once effected) were, many of them, of such a nature, that they plainly seemed to indicate the hand of God himself. Miraculous exertions of God's power are never it is certain, either mediately or immediately displayed without a cause: A wise legislature departeth not at any time from the laws which he hath himself enacted, except in cases of singular necessity. Now, none other cause can possibly be named, requiring those exertions, than that which was alleged by Christ; I mean the necessity of them at that period, for a testimony of the truth of his doctrine. The eye-witnesses of his miracles could imagine none other; and when, as we have

observed, very many of those witnesses were pious and devout persons, it were impious to suppose the Almighty to have acted thus, on purpose to deceive them. From this single consideration, very many of the Jews who lived about the time of Jesus, and who on no account could be persuaded to relinquish one tittle of the Mosaic law, (such were they who were called Nazarenes and Ebionites) nevertheless would readily acknowledge that the mission of our Saviour was divine.

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## CH A P. VI.

### THE RESURRECTION OF THE SAME JESUS CONSISTENTLY AND CREDIBLY ATTESTED.

THE various miracles which Christ performed afford not a stronger argument to recommend his religion and to propagate his worship, than that which arises from the subsequent event of his actual and personal resurrection from the cross, from death, and from the grave. Christians, of all countries and in all ages, declare this event not only as an absolute and undoubted fact, but as the principal foundation of their faith. Now, the first Teachers of Christianity could never have been able to have induced their hearers to make this declaration, if they had not convinced them of the truth of the doctrine upon the fullest and most complete evidence; and to men, who are possessed of some degree of judgment, all evidence must have appeared insufficient and inconclusive, except the solemn affirmation of those Teachers that they themselves had been actual eye-witnesses of the fact. Without the

solemn

solemn affirmation, no man of common sense would have confided in their word; especially in times like those, when any expression of that confidence exposed him immediately to the greatest perils and misfortunes. That they positively made and resolutely maintained this affirmation, is apparent, as well from their own accounts, as from the accounts of others; nay, it is recorded even, that they appealed to the evidence of five hundred brethren at once, who had all seen Jesus when he had risen from the dead. So general, so extensive an appeal, is by no means the usual practice of *impostors*; neither is it possible that any *false* assertion should obtain the concurrent testimony of so numerous a conspiracy. If, however, the evidence of those twelve persons, who were the first and most distinguished ministers of the Christian religion, had been the sole evidence adduced, the truth of the resurrection ought still to be admitted. No man is wicked without some inducement to become so. The apostles could have *no* inducement. Ambition never could have prompted them to attempt an imposture of this kind, when either the Heathens or the Jews, who branded them with every mark of contempt and of disgrace, had the entire possession of all honours and distinctions. The views of avarice could not have prevailed with them; when, on the other hand, their very profession of Christianity was frequently followed by the instant confiscation of all property, if they were found possessed of any; and even if this had not been so, the propagation of the gospel would still unavoidably oblige them to forego and to neglect all temporal concerns. It is equally impossible that any other worldly consideration or advantage could have induced them to declare a falsehood, when the very apostolical function of itself necessarily exposed them to hardships, to hunger,

to



to thirst, to stripes, and to imprisonment. The mere applause which they might acquire from their own party, was surely not an object, of sufficient import, that men of their plain and humble situation, whose principles and practice were equally averse from all pride and ostentation, should have considered it as an ample compensation for such a load of calamities. They must have been conscious, at the same time, of the violent opposition which their doctrine would be sure to meet with *universally*, as well from the self-interested and narrow views of human nature in general, as from the express authority of every individual state; nothing less, therefore, than the divine promise could possibly have encouraged them to hope for success so rapid and so extensive. It may further be observed, that however great they might imagine this attainable applause to be, they never could have proposed to themselves any long enjoyment of it; as we find most plainly from their own and from all subsequent accounts, (while God designedly concealed his intention in this respect) that they looked for an almost immediate destruction and end of all things. We are to conclude, then, that the apostles devised this imposture (in regard to the resurrection) in order to support and protect their religion: But this surely, upon a fair consideration of the matter, can never be imagined or asserted. They must either have believed or disbelieved; in their own minds, the truth of that religion. If they had not believed it to be the *best*, they never would have preferred it to others, in the exercise of which they might have lived with much more security, reputation, and respect: neither would they have professed that religion, however *true* they might believe it, if they had not believed also that profession to be *necessary*: especially

sially as it likewise was easy to foresee, and from  
 experience immediately to learn, that death would  
 be the certain consequence of that profession to  
 whole multitudes of their adherents; whereby they  
 would become, in every instance, as being the un-  
 just and unnecessary authors of it, undoubtedly guilt-  
 y of the crime of murder. If, on the other hand,  
 they were convinced of the *truth*, and of the superi-  
 or *excellence* of their religion; were convinced also  
 of the *necessity* which obliged them to profess that  
 religion, even when their master was no more;  
 they could never possibly have been so convinced,  
 had their master deceived them in the promise of his  
 resurrection. To every man, in his right reason,  
 the breach of such a promise *must* have been suffi-  
 cient to have made him disavow instantly every  
 article of his faith, in spite of all prejudice and pre-  
 conception whatsoever. All kinds of religion, but,  
 above all, the Christian tenets, prohibit lying and  
 self-witnessing, particularly in matters of a sacred  
 nature. The apostles, therefore, from a motive of  
 regard to religion, and especially to a religion, like  
 theirs, could never have been induced to assert a  
 falsehood. They were men, moreover, whose mo-  
 rals and behaviour their very enemies were unable to  
 censure; nor is any circumstance ever urged in ob-  
 jection to them, that plainness and simplicity alone  
 accepted, which naturally removed them as far as  
 possible from every inclination to invent a falsehood.  
 There was not one of them who did not endure the  
 severest trials and distresses, because of their profes-  
 sion of belief in the resurrection of Jesus. Many of them  
 even actually underwent the most uncommon and  
 extraordinary kinds of death, on account of their  
 positive affirmation and evidence of the fact. A  
 person in his right senses it is true, might *possibly*  
 undergo

undergo such sufferings in support of some favourite object of his firm belief; but it is altogether incredible that not *one alone*, but that *many* persons should endure them voluntarily; for the sake of any falsehood, when they knew it *to be* a falsehood, and could have no interest in obtruding that falsehood on the world. That the apostles, however, were neither fools nor madmen, is very evidently shewn, as well by their lives as by their writings.

What has been said of the first apostles, may be said also of St. Paul, who publicly declared, that Christ "was seen of *him* also" sitting on the throne of heaven. Now Paul was a man who had been "taught according to the perfect manner" of a Jewish learning, and to whom the highest offices and honours had been open, had he walked in the steps of his ancestors; nevertheless, he esteemed it a duty incumbent on him, for the sake of that profession, to subject himself to the abuse and hatred of his own kindred; to undertake arduous, hazardous and laborious expeditions, both by sea and land into all parts of the world; and even to endure ultimately an ignominious death.

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## C H A P. VII.

AN ANSWER TO THE OBJECTION WHICH IS FOUNDED ON THE APPARENT IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE RESURRECTION.

WE are, doubtless, unable to disbelieve the truth of any fact when it is established upon evidence so numerous and so conclusive, unless it can be urged that the fact itself is absolutely impossible.

No

Now all things it is said, are impossible, which imply a contradiction. The resurrection, however, cannot be considered in that light. We might say it is true, if we should hear it asserted that the same person was alive and dead at the same time; but there can be no reason to think it impossible that a dead person should be restored to life, especially by the power of that Being, who first gave life to all.

Men of great wisdom have thought it not impossible; for Plato records an instance of it, in regard to Er the Armenian; Heraclides Ponticus tells us of a woman who was restored to life; Herodotus relates the same of Aristæus: and Plutarch gives us another instance. Now, whether these accounts be true or false, they still serve to shew that very learned men have believed it a *possible* event.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS BEING GRANTED,  
THE TRUTH OF HIS RELIGION MUST BE UN-  
DENIABLE.

SINCE then the *possibility* of the resurrection can no longer be questioned; and since the *reality* of it is attested by credible and sufficient evidence, in so much that Bechai the chief ruler of the Jews, confessed himself perfectly convinced thereby, that Jesus did truly and certainly return to life: since, as it is allowed by *all* parties, that the same Jesus, as by Divine command, propose and introduce a new religion to mankind; *that* religion must consequently be *true*; as it would be wholly repugnant to the divine attributes of justice and of wisdom, that God should recommend in so distinguished a manner, a person who had imposed upon the world

world in a matter of such high importance: more especially, as Christ himself, *previously to the event*, had foretold the approach and the manner of his death, and had also foretold his resurrection; actually adding, at the same time, that these things would *therefore* come to pass, that the truth of his religion might be confirmed and established throughout all nations.

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## C H A P. VIII.

### THE SUPERIOR EXCELLENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

THE arguments, hitherto adduced, arise from the facts themselves; the arguments, which arise from the nature of the religion, remain to be considered. And indeed we must either reject altogether every species of divine worship, (which no person will ever think of doing, who believes the existence and providence of a God, and who considers also that man is a being endowed with an excellent intellectual faculty, as well as with a power of election in moral good and evil, whereby he becomes a proper subject of reward and punishment) or else we must admit the tenets of Christianity: and this not only because of the outward evidence of the facts before-mentioned, but also because of the intrinsic and essential properties of religion itself, since none can possibly be produced by any age or nation, more excellent in respect of the proposed reward, more perfect in respect of the enjoined precepts, more admirable in the means of its appointed dispensation.



## CHAP. IX.

## THE EXCELLENCE OF THE PROPOSED REWARD.

TO begin, then, with the reward or ultimate design of man (that being, as we say, the first object in intention, though the last in execution) we find, if we recur to the express covenant of the law, that Moses promised nothing to the Jews, in the institution of their religion, beyond the blessings of this present world; the blessings of a "fruitful land;" of "plenteous storehouses;" of long and healthful lives; of rising and hopeful generations. All, beyond this, is either hidden in mysterious darkness, or discoverable only by learned disquisition and abstruse reasoning. Hence it was, that many who professed their observance of the Mosaic law (the sect of the Sadducees in particular) disclaimed and rejected every expectation of reward after death. Among the Grecians, who derived all their learning from the Chaldeans and Egyptians, the few philosophers who entertained some imperfect ideas of another state *after* the dissolution of this visible existence, still spoke of it as a matter of the greatest doubt and uncertainty, as we may perceive by the dissertations of Socrates, and by the writings of Tully, Seneca, and others; and in spite of their diligent endeavours to find arguments in support of the opinion, they were able to advance little or nothing upon *certain* grounds: for the arguments in general which they adduce, hold good no further in respect to the human, than to the brute, creation. No wonder, then, that others, in consequence of this observation, devised the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Others again, seeing that this doctrine could be supported by no certain evidence or proof, and unable,

at

at the same time, to deny altogether any ultimate design of man's existence, were driven to this desperate assertion, that virtue was its own reward, and that wisdom alone were an ample security for happiness amid the keenest tortures of the brazen bull of Phalaris. Others, however, not without reason condemned also *this* opinion; sufficiently convinced that felicity, and especially *supreme* felicity, could not possibly consist in any thing, attended with dangers, with misfortunes, with tortures, and with death; unless, indeed, we could contrive to regulate our feelings by the sound of words, and totally discard every *real* sensation. They conceived, therefore, that the supreme good and ultimate design of man must certainly be found in sensual gratifications. Men, however, abundantly and effectually refuted this doctrine, as a doctrine destructive to every seed of honesty and virtue, implanted in the human heart: reducing, in effect, the upright and sublime views of man, to a level with the low and groveling condition of the brute creation. Such was the wandering state of ignorance and doubt in which mankind were lost, at that period when Christ introduced amongst them the true knowledge of their final object: He promised unto all his followers a life to come; a life not only exempt from any future death, anxiety, and trouble, but attended also with the highest bliss. Nor was his promise limited only to the *soul* of man (the future felicity of which they had been led, partly upon wild conjectural, partly upon obscure traditional authority, in some measure to expect;) but it was extended also to the *body*: and this surely on the strictest principles of justice; that the body, which is often doomed for the sake of the divine law to suffer hardships, tortures, and death, may not fail in the end to receive a compensation. Furthermore the blessings, which are promised, are of no vile and sordid

sordid nature, like the banquets of which the grosser Jews expect *their* heaven to consist, they are not the lustful indulgences which the Mahometans promise to themselves as *their* paradise; (for these are the mere means of relief, peculiarly provided, against the frailties of this mortal existence; the one for the support of life in single individuals, the other for the continuance of their respective kinds;) but they are the blessings of a spiritual, incorruptible, and glorious body; the blessings of a soul, of infinite perfection, to know even God and his divine providence, and to comprehend all things that may now be unrevealed to us; the blessings of a will, replete with complacency and joy, but, above all, continually occupied in the contemplation, in the admiration and in the praise of God. Blessings, in short, far greater and more excellent, than any which the most exalted comparisons in this world can enable us to imagine, or the heart of man can possibly conceive.

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## C H A P. X.

WE WILL SHEW, BY THE WAY, THE ABSURDITY OF THE ASSERTION, THAT OUR BODIES, AFTER DISSOLUTION, CANNOT BE RESTORED.

BESIDE the objection which we have already answered (chap. vii.) it is, further, frequently denied, on the ground of absolute impossibility, that the human fabric, when dissolved, should ever be identically re-compacted. But the argument is groundless and absurd. Is it not determined by philosophers in general, that matter, whatever changes it may undergo, does still remain existent, and capa-

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ble of various appearances? And can we then doubt or deny the sufficiency of the *knowledge* of God, in discovering the material particles of man, however distantly and widely scattered? Can we doubt or deny the sufficiency of his *power*, in re-collecting and restoring those particles? May not God in his own universe produce that effect, which chymists are seen to produce in their furnaces and vessels, when they select and consolidate the homogeneous, however disunited parts? The course of nature supplies us further, with examples, in the seeds of the vegetable and animal creation, that how much soever the appearance of the matter may be changed, it may still revert to that identical form from which it has originated.—Nor is it impossible to resolve the difficulty which some men have contrived to raise, by their assertion, that as in the first place the human bodies are converted into the food of beasts and cattle, so again these afterwards become the food of man. Now the greatest part of our food does not form any part of our bodies, but passes off in the secretions or accretions of the body; as in the instances of phlegm and bile; and a great part of that which *both* a nutritive effect, is afterwards carried off by distempers, or consumed by the internal heat, and circumambient air. Hence therefore it is probable that God, who so careth for the dumb animals that he suffereth not ~~one~~ of them to perish *without him*, may regard the *human* bodies with peculiar care, so as to prevent any part of them, which may become the food of *other* human bodies, from being turned into their material substance, any more than poisons or medicines are; and this more especially, as we seem instinctively to know from nature that human flesh was not intended to be made human food. If this however be not so, and if our future bodies must lay  
aside



aside every particle which they may have, by any means, acquired in addition to their first and original constitution, the *identity* of each particular body will still remain unaffected; since even in our present bodies we perhaps experience a *greater* variation of our component particles; nay, the very butterfly may be comprized in the worm, and the substance of a vegetable or a liquid in some most minute part of matter; whence they may afterwards be increased respectively into their proper size and quantity. Since, therefore, these and many other positions may without impropriety be advanced, the re-union of our bodily parts, when dissolved, cannot reasonably be thought impossible: and men of the deepest erudition, as, for example, Zoroaster among the Chaldeans, Theopompus among the Peripatetics, and almost all the sect of the Stoics unanimously, have believed it an event, which not only might possibly, but would actually, come to pass.

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## C H A P. XI.

THE EXCELLENT SANCTITY OF THE CHRISTIAN PRECEPTS, IN REGARD TO THE DIVINE WORSHIP.

**T**HE second article wherein we may observe the superiority of the Christian Religion over all other institutions which either are, have been, or ever can be, introduced, is that of the excellent sanctity of its precepts in respect to the Divine Worship, as well as to the other particulars enjoined. In almost all parts of the world, as Porphyrius has shewn



at large, and as our modern voyagers assure us, the religious rites of Paganism were replete with acts of cruelty. The expiatory virtue of human sacrifices was believed so strongly and so generally, that neither Grecian literature or Roman jurisprudence have been able to overcome the prejudice. This appears from the accounts which are given us of the victims that were offered up by the Grecians to Bacchus Omeſta, and of the sacrifices that were made by the Romans, of the Grecian and Gaulish men and women to Jupiter Latialis. Even their most sacred mysteries, whether of Ceres or of Bacchus (whom they styled, Liber Pater) abounded with all kinds of obscenity: as appeared, when the oath of religious secrecy was once broken, and the transactions began to be divulged, as they are very fully, by Clemens Alexandrinus and others. The days set apart for the honour of the Gods, were distinguished by such games and public spectacles that Cato was ashamed to be present at them. The Jewish religion, it is true, contained nothing in its principles of an illicit or immoral tendency; but still, lest a people prone to idolatry, as the Jews were, should revolt from the true religion, it was necessary to load them with strict and ceremonious injunctions, which were in themselves of a nature totally indifferent and immaterial: such, for example, were the animal sacrifices prescribed to them; the law of circumcision; the express prohibition from all manner of work upon the sabbath days, and the restrictions that debarred them from several kinds of food. Some of these ordinances have been borrowed by the Mahometans, who have added to them a total abstinence from wine. We are taught, on the other hand, by the Christian Religion, that "God is a Spirit, and that they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth;"

truth;" and in all those "reasonable services," which without any injunction are obviously and intrinsically excellent. It requi eth "the circumcision of the heart and not of the flesh"; it instructeth us to "keep the feast" not by abstaining from every work, but from *unlawfu* works; to make a sacrifice not of "the fat of bulls" or of "the blood of goats," but of our own blood, if occasion should require it, in testimony of the truth of Christ. It teacheth us to believe, that when "we give alms of our goods unto the poor, we lend unto the Lord." It enjoineth us not to abstain from any particular kinds of meat or of drink, but so to use them in temperance and moderation, that they may conduce to our well-being. It commandeth us to subdue the body by occasional fastings, in order to keep it in subjection to the mind, that we may thereby be enabled to pursue with more alacrity all spiritual exercises. The *main* points, however, of Christianity, are shewn every where to consist in a devout and holy faith, whereby being disposed to a stedfast obedience, we rely wholly on God, and "stagger not at his promises;" and hence ariseth hope, and perfect love towards our God and towards our neighbours, so that we obey the commandments of God not "in the spirit of bondage again to fear," but that our service may be "acceptable unto God," and that we may have him, through his unbounded goodness, our Father and Rewarder.—Furthermore we are commanded to "continue instant in prayer," but not for the acquisition of riches or of honours, or of any of those things "which many covet after" to their own destruction; but, first, for the things which may conduce to God's glory, and for the supply of those temporal concerns which the wants of our frail nature may require; submitting all beyond this, to the  
Divine

Divine Providence, and resting patient and content, whatever may befall us: but more especially we are commanded to pray with all earnestness for the spiritual concerns of our eternal welfare; the forgiveness of sins past, and the future blessings of his holy spirit, that we may continue unshaken by threats, unseduced by temptations, "in a stedfast course unto the end"

Herein consisteth the worshipping of God enjoined by Christianity; and surely none other can possibly be imagined more worthy of his divine nature.

## CH A P. XII.

IN REGARD TO THE DUTIES WHICH WE OWE TO  
ALL MEN, WHETHER FRIENDS OR ENEMIES.

**E**QUALLY excellent are the principles of Christianity in the duties which they enjoin us to observe towards our neighbours.—Born in arms and cradled in the shield, the religion of Mahomet can only breathe forth slaughter, and live by war. The constitution of Sparta, extolled as it was above all the establishments of the other Grecian states, and distinguished even by the sanction of oracular approbation, was directed wholly to the purposes of martial science and exploits; and, as Aristotle remarks with censure, the splendor of her name consisted solely in the splendor of her arms. Nevertheless it is asserted by the same philosopher, that a state of war against Barbarians is justified, if not established, by the law of nature: whereas, on the contrary, we doubtless were designed by nature to live in universal friendship

friendship and social intercourse. Surely then it is altogether unjust and indefensible, that we should punish with death the murderer of a single individual, while the murderer of nations is known to glory in his deeds, and to boast of them in public triumph, as of great and meritorious exploits. From what other source, however, did the illustrious Romans acquire their celebrity, than from the wars in which they were engaged? wars frequently and manifestly unjust, as their own historians, in regard to those that were maintained in Sardinia and in Cyprus, do not scruple to allow. And indeed generally speaking, according to the accounts of the most celebrated annalists, the political principles of almost all nations never held it by any means disgraceful, to subsist by plunder and depredation upon all who lived beyond the limits of their own territories. An unforgiving spirit of revenge is actually laid down, by Aristotle and Cicero, as a requisite and commendable principle. The public diversions of the Pagans consisted in the bloody acts of mutual butchery committed by their gladiators: the exposing of their children was a common and even daily practice. Among the Hebrews, it is true, a juster system of legal polity obtained; a purer discipline; nevertheless, among a people of ungovernable passions, occasional violations of the law were winked at, and indeed allowed; as at the time when they were justly sent "to smite and utterly destroy" the seven nations in the land of Canaan. Not satiated with this, they persecuted all who opposed or dissented from them, with the most implacable cruelty; of which even now we may observe sufficient proofs in their prayers and imprecations against all the professors of Christianity. Their very laws allowed them to avenge every injury by strict retaliation; and "whoso meeteth the murderer of his kinsman, shall slay him."

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The law of Christ, on the other hand, teacheth us that we revēge not injuries received, either by word or deed, lest the evil which we condemn in others, we afterwards approve by our own example. We are to love indeed and to assist the virtuous, but we are to love also and to assist the wicked, even as God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust."

### C H A P. XIII.

IN REGARD TO THE INSTITUTION OF MATRIMONY,

**T**HE union of the sexes, whereby the human species is continued, is a subject well worthy of the highest legal consideration. We cannot wonder at the great neglect and disregard which the Pagans shewed in this particular, when we read of the rapes and adulteries committed even by the gods, the objects of their worship! Nay, was it not their practice, also, to defend and justify by example from the gods themselves, the very crimes of a still more infamous, because unnatural, connexion? Was it not for this meritorious act that Ganymede of old, and Antinous after him, were enrolled in the number of those gods? The practice of this scandalous enormity is frequent among the Mahometans; and is even thought allowable by the Chinese and other nations; while the Grecian philosophers, it seems, have taken great pains to affix a fair appellation to a foul crime. The promiscuous enjoyment of all women in common, so highly extolled by the greatest philosophers among them, was, in effect, the conversion of the whole state into one common brothel; while some even of the



the brute animals are seen to observe a sort of conjugal obligation. Far more just and reasonable it is, therefore, that man, the most excellent and most distinguished of all animals, should not be suffered to derive his origin from casual and uncertain parents, to the total extinction of those mutual ties, the filial and parental affections. The Hebrew laws prohibit indeed all impurity and uncleanness, but allow a plurality of wives, and authorize a man to put away his wife upon any, however frivolous, pretence; as the Mahometans at this day often do, and the Greeks and Latins did, to such a licentious excess, that we find the Roman Cato and the Spartans in general, occasionally lending out their wives to other men.— That most perfect law, the law of Christ, on the contrary, reacheth to the very root of all vices; it teacheth us that “whofo hath attempted the chastity of any woman, or hath looked on a woman to lust after her,” thereby becometh guilty; for God, “unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known,” considereth the lustful criminality of the will, independent of the actual perpetration of the deed: and as, by all real friendship we intend a perpetual and indissoluble union, he justly enjoined us to consider in the same light, that union, which includeth a full participation and mutual connexion both of soul and body. The superior advantage of this institution, in respect to the proper education of children, is a truth as obvious as undeniable. Monogamy was even the established custom of some particular Pagan nations; among the Germans for example, and the Romans: and herein the Christians also follow their example, on a principle of justice in repaying, on the part of the husband, the entire and undivided affection of the wife; while, at the same time, the regulations of domestic œconomy may be better preserved

served under one *head* and *mistress* of the family; and all those dissensions avoided which a diversity of mothers must create among the children.

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#### C H A P. XIV.

#### IN REGARD TO THE USE OF OUR TEMPORAL POSSESSIONS.

ON the subject of worldly *goods*, as they commonly are called, it is observable that theft, in some Pagan countries, as among the Egyptians and the Spartans, was a practice permitted and encouraged. Others, again, though they punished an act of this kind in individuals, had rarely any scruple of committing it themselves, in a public and corporate capacity: to this purport, a Roman orator was used to observe of his own countrymen, that if a general obligation should take place among them to restore to every one his own, they would presently find themselves reduced to their original huts and cottages. The Hebrews, it is true, had no such allowed practices; but still, that the law might in some degree adapt itself to the temper of the nation, they were allowed "to lend upon usury to *strangers*;" and on the same account were riches, among other inducements, proposed as a recompense to the righteous and obedient. Christianity, however, not only expressly prohibiteth all manner of injustice against any persons whatsoever, but further enjoineth us not to fix our attention upon objects so frail and so precarious as worldly possessions: evidently because the mind cannot possibly pay a due consideration to two distinct matters of enquiry, when each

of them is sufficient, singly, to engross the whole  
 man; and when, jointly, they must often lead him  
 into jarring and repugnant counsels: the care,  
 moreover, and the deceitfulness of riches, as well in  
 the pursuit as in the possession of them, are generally  
 productive of a state of slavish and tormenting anxi-  
 ety, which embitters all their promised pleasures;  
 whereas the real wants and even wishes of our na-  
 ture are neither numerous, difficult, or extravagant.  
 Not that it is incumbent upon us to cast into the  
 sea, as some philosophers absurdly did, all further  
 indulgencies which God may be pleased to bestow  
 upon us; neither ought we to hoard up our money  
 uselessly, or to squander it away unprofitably: we  
 should apply it, rather to the relief of the wants of  
 others; we should "give to him that asketh us, and  
 from him that would borrow of us, turn not away;"  
 or so it behoveth them to do, who consider themselves  
 not the absolute disposers of these things, but the  
 managers and stewards of God, the Supreme and  
 Universal Father! We should regard a well-placed  
 gift of charity as a "treasure laid up for ourselves in  
 heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt;  
 and where thieves do not break through nor steal."  
 The primitive Christians displayed, in genuine and  
 undissembled colours, a singular example of this  
 Christian charity, when "they of Macedonia and  
 Thracia made a certain contribution for the poor  
 saints which were at Jerusalem;" as if the whole  
 world were to them as one united family. We are  
 cautioned at the same time to let no views of osten-  
 sion or of recompence destroy the beauty of bene-  
 volence, for it loseth all merit in the eye of God, if  
 we regard any other object than himself. Lest any one,  
 however (which is sometimes the case) should allege,  
 as a cloak to his avarice, the future apprehensions of  
 infirmity

infirmity and age; or the fear of eventual misfortunes, whereby he may actually be reduced to want the assistance of his present superfluities; the law of Christ professes a special and peculiar care of all who shall observe its precepts: and in order to confirm their faith in God, reminds them of his manifest providence in feeding "the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the earth;" and in cloathing the grass and the lillies of the field. Disgraceful thought! That man, then, should watch with jealous caution the goodness and the power of God; and should only trust him as a fraudulent debtor, as far as the pledges in possession will secure and indemnify his suspicious creditor.

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## C H A P. XV.

### IN REGARD TO OATHS.

**P**ERJURY, indeed, is forbidden by all laws whatsoever; but the law of Christ enjoineth us further, that except in cases of unavoidable necessity we "*Swear not at all*;" so adhering to the strictest truth in all our communications, that an oath may never be required or exacted from us.

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## C H A P. XVI.

### IN REGARD TO OTHER MATTERS

**T**HERE is, in short, no precept of particular excellence, recommended either by the writings and philosophical works of the Grecians, or by the opinions

opinions of the Hebrew, or of any other nation, which is not comprised in the doctrine of Christianity, and indeed authorized as by divine sanction: such, for example, is the frequent exhortation to modesty, to temperance, to goodness, to honesty, to prudence; such again are the precepts which concern the relative duties of magistrates and subjects; of parents and children; of masters and servants; of wives and husbands: such, especially, are the injunctions laid upon us to avoid those vices, which, by a semblance as it were, of virtue, so frequently misled the Grecians and the Romans; the vices, I mean, of pride, vain-glory and ambition. But truly and most completely excellent is that sum of all instruction, that short but comprehensive precept, which teacheth us, that we should love God above all things; and our neighbours as ourselves; in other words commanding us, that "Whatsoever we would that men should do unto us, we should do unto them likewise."

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## C H A P. XVII.

ANSWER TO THE OBJECTION WHICH IS GROUNDED ON THE CONTROVERSIAL DISPUTES, SUBSISTING AMONG THE PROFESSORS OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE great diversity of opinions which have been advanced, and the infinite variety of sects which have consequently arisen among the Christians may perhaps be an argument with some men, against the boasted excellence of the Christian precepts: But here it is obvious to reply, that the same effects are



observable in almost all the arts and sciences ; partly arising from the natural imbecility of the human faculties ; and partly from the unavoidable impediments which obstruct the judgement in deep and learned disquisitions. That diversity of opinions, however, is always confined within certain limits, upon which *all parties* are originally agreed, and from which they set out in quest of speculation and argument. The mathematician may dispute upon the possibility of squaring a circle, but it can be no matter of dispute with him, whether or not, when equal parts are taken from an equal whole, the remainder will be equal ? And the same is observable in respect to the study of natural philosophy, of medicine, and of other sciences. In like manner we may say, that the different opinions of the Christians can never shake the authenticity of those fundamental principles, the precepts of Christianity, which have furnished the grounds of our highest panegyric : and herein, especially, the truth of them is evident : because however ingenious in the search of new controversial matter the heated disputants may at any time have been ; none have ever dared to deny that Christ was the author of this doctrine, which notwithstanding, in their practice, they have not scrupled to reject. And indeed the absurdity of such a denial could only be equalled by that of the philosophers who cavilled at the colour of snow : for as the dispute in one case is instantly settled by an appeal to our senses ; so the presumption in the other, is universally exposed by the concurrent testimony of all Christian nations, and of all the books which have been written, as well by the first teachers of Christianity, and by their immediate successors, as by all subsequent professors of it ; by men who have even laid down their lives in defence of

the Christian faith. Every impartial mind, therefore must heartily and entirely believe in the truth of this doctrine, when it is so strongly and positively authenticated by all these persons; just as we believe in the tenets of Socrates, upon the authority of Plato, Xenophon, and his other scholars; or in the precepts and opinions of the stoics, upon the credit of the accounts which are given us by Zeno.

## CH A P. XVIII.

THE EXCELLENCE OF CHRISTIANITY IS FURTHER  
PROVED; AND

INFERRED FROM THE EXCELLENCE OF ITS DIVINE AUTHOR.

A THIRD instance of that superiority which the Christian religion claims over all other institutions, that either are, or ever can be thought of, arises from the manner in which it was delivered and promulgated. And here we shall naturally direct our first enquiry to the actual cause and founder of it. The greatest and wisest philosophers of Greece were wont to confess openly their inability to make any material progress upon grounds of any real certainty: they declared, that truth was hidden, and that the mental eye is soiled and dazzled by the contemplation of divine objects, as the eyes of an owl are by the light of the sun. There was moreover not one among them all, who was not personally addicted to some particular vice or failing; to servile flattery; to ungovernable passions; to churlish or cynic impudence. Their

mutual jealousy and hatred are plainly shewn in the animosity with which they disputed about words and trifling matters; nor is their indifference in religious worship less apparent, when although they believed in one God, they were contented to set that God aside, and to worship other objects, even though they did not consider them entitled to divine honours; when, in short, they only squared their tenets of religion by the rules of political interest or of local custom. We may perceive how little they could say with certainty in respect to the reward of virtue, even from that last disputation of Socrates at the time of his approaching death.

Mahomet, the founder of a religion so extensively established, is allowed even by his followers, to have been a man, whose whole life was devoted to the most profligate and abandoned practices. In respect to the future reward, which he said would assuredly be found to consist in the sensual enjoyments of feasting and of women, he gave no proof whatever in confirmation of that promise; since his own body is not even reported to have returned to life, but at this present day lies buried at Medina.

Moses, the founder of the Jewish law, a man of exemplary character, is nevertheless not entirely exempt from censure; as in the instance of his great reluctance to obey the express command of God, in undertaking his embassy to Pharaoh; and again, in that of his distrust in God, which the Hebrews allow him to have shewn, in respect to the promise of water from the rock. Harassed as he was continually by murmurings and seditions in the wilderness, he himself attained very few, if any, of those rewards which by his institution he promised to his people.

Neither

Neither did he ever reach that main object of his views, the happy land of Canaan.

Christ, on the other hand, is described by his disciples as "one without sin;" and to his enemies he hath justly said, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Whatsoever he commanded that others should observe, he strictly regarded in his own practice. He faithfully executed every article of that commission entrusted to him by his father: his whole life was blameless and without guile: of infinite patience under injuries and tortures, as he shewed in his death upon the cross; of infinite love to all men, even to his enemies and murderers, unto whom he besought his father to extend his mercy and forgiveness. The reward which he promised to his followers, he himself is not only *reported*, but *proved*, to have obtained, in the fullest and most eminent degree: for many, after his resurrection, beheld him, heard him, and even touched him; he was carried up into heaven in the sight of the twelve; and it is clearly evident that he there attained the supreme dominion over all things, as he afterwards endowed his apostles with the use of all languages whatever, and with other miraculous powers; according to his promise when he departed from them. It is wholly impossible, then, after these things, to question the faithfulness or the ability of Christ in giving us the promised recompense. And thus have we exemplified, in *one* point, the superior excellence of the Christian religion above all other institutions; for Christ the founder of it, illustrated his precepts by his practice, and proved himself empowered, by his own example, to realize his promises.

SECONDLY,



§ SECONDLY,  
FROM ITS WONDERFUL AND EXTENSIVE PROMULGATION.

LET us now proceed to examine this doctrine in regard to its progress and effects: and indeed, if these particulars be properly considered, it will be totally impossible to call it any other than a divine institution, if we only admit a providence over human affairs. That providence would necessarily promote and encourage to the utmost the *most excellent* system of morality and virtue: Christianity then hath certainly received that promotion and encouragement, since we find it propagated throughout all Europe, the most northern recesses of it not excepted; nor is it less so throughout all Asia and the Asiatic isles; throughout Egypt also, and Ethiopia, and some other parts of Africa; and lastly throughout America. It is plain, moreover, from the histories of all ages, from the Christian accounts, from the synodical decrees, and from an ancient tradition which is still preserved among the Barbarians, in regard to the expeditions and miracles of Thomas, of Andrew, and of other apostles; it is plain, I say, from these concurrent evidences, that this extensive promulgation of Christianity is of no modern date, but of the highest antiquity. Clemens, Tertullianus, and others, remark how universally the name of Christ was celebrated even in their days, among the Britons, the Germans, and other the most remote nations. Where is the religion then, which, in point of extensive reception, can be compared with that of Christ? The term Paganism is one general description of men, not one particular religion. The Pagan adoration had no single and exclusive object



ect: the stars, the elements were worshipped by the Pagans; particular kinds of animals were idolized by some of them, and imaginary deities by others: they were not governed by one and the same law; they were not instructed, as we are, by one and the same master. The Jews, it is true, are widely dispersed; but yet they are a single nation; neither did their religion receive any great increase at a point of numbers, after Christ's appearance; their very law, on the contrary, is indebted for its principal notoriety to the Christians rather than the Jews. Mahometanism is, in many places, extensively but in few exclusively, established: for Christianity obtains in the Mahometan countries, and in some parts more generally than the national religion itself; while on the other hand, Mahometans are very rarely to be met with in the Christian world.

### § THIRDLY,

FROM A CONSIDERATION OF THE WEAKNESS AND SIMPLICITY OF THE FIRST TEACHERS OF THIS DOCTRINE.

LET us next consider, by what instruments or means this rapid progress was effected, that, in this point also, Christianity may stand the test against all other institutions. Mankind in general we perceive, are naturally inclined to imitate the examples of their princes and superiors: and this they do more especially, when legal or compulsory methods are at hand to enforce that imitation. To this the Pagan, and this the Mahometan religion, is indebted for its whole advancement: Whereas the primitive teachers of Christianity were not only destitute of all authority, but were even men of the most abject fortunes;

tunes; such as fishermen, weavers, and other mean mechanics. The Christian religion notwithstanding, in a period of about thirty years, was by their means extended throughout all parts of the Roman empire, and even to the Parthians and the Indians. And not in the commencement alone, but in the continuance of it for nearly three hundred years, it was so successfully supported and promoted, solely by the means of private individuals, without menaces, without bribes: and in direct opposition to the utmost efforts of all civil power and authority, that, before Constantine embraced Christianity, it obtained in at least half the countries of the Roman world. Among the Grecians, all who offered any moral precepts and instruction to mankind, attracted at the same time the public notice and regard by their eminence in some particular branch of literary science; the Platonists, by their attention to geometry; the Peripatetics by their skill in natural philosophy; the Stoics, by their subtilties in logical disputation; the Pythagoreans, by their proficiency in harmony and numbers. Many, moreover, had every collateral assistance which the finest elocution could bestow: such were Plato, Xenophon, Theophrastus. No arts like these had the first Christian teachers, to recommend *their* precepts: their language was plain, simple, unadorned; they openly and bluntly delivered their instructions, their promises, their threats. And since it is impossible that these means could ever have effected the progress that was made by Christianity, we must unavoidably infer, that the glorious undertaking was accomplished, either by the immediate interposition, or by the secret benediction, of God himself; or rather by the joint operation of his miracles and his favour.

## C H A P. XIX.

FROM THE VERY GREAT IMPEDIMENTS OPPOSING  
THE RECEPTION, AND FROM THE VIOLENT DIS-  
COURAGEMENTS SUPPRESSING THE PROFESSION,  
OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

IT should also be remembered, that the first converts to the doctrine of these poor mechanics, were people not previously devoid of any certain system of religion whatsoever, as the first receivers of the Pagan and Mahometan institutions were known to be; for in that case they perhaps might easily have been induced to receive any that might offer) much less were they prepared for it by any antecedent institution, as the Hebrews were for the Mosaic law, by the ceremony of circumcision, and by the knowledge of one only God; but they were, on the contrary, a people biassed by opinions, and influenced by that second nature, the prejudice of customs, repugnant in the strongest manner to the novel precepts of Christianity: they were, I say, early educated and fixedly established, as well by legal as by parental authority, either in the Pagan solemnities, or in the Jewish rituals. Another, and an equal disadvantage to this doctrine, consisted in the extreme severity of those calamities, which the converts to Christianity were obliged as such to endure frequently, and to apprehend incessantly. Since therefore we are all by nature averse from such a state of sufferance, it necessarily follows, that the introduction and reception of those tenets, to which such calamities were consequent must have been attended with the greatest difficulty. The Christians were long debarred from all offices and civil honours. Amercements, confiscations,

cations, banishment, composed a trifling part of their afflictions : they were condemned to labour in the mines ; they were tortured by all the inventions which the most refined cruelty could suggest : the punishments which they underwent, so continually terminated in death itself, that, according to the historians of those times, the fatal effects that were produced by them were never equalled, at any one period, by the ravages of famine, of pestilence, or of war. The manners of their deaths, moreover, were as uncommon as they were barbarous : the unhappy sufferers were either burnt alive at the stake, suspended on the cross, or executed by some other means of equal inhumanity, of which we cannot read or even think without the greatest horror. These enormities, however, (practised as they were with very few, and then only with partial intermissions, throughout the Roman empire, almost until the time of Constantine, and in other places even till a later period) were so far from diminishing the numbers of the Christians, that the blood of the martyrs might be called, on the contrary, the very seed of the church ; so quickly and abundantly new proselytes sprang up, to supply the place of those who were cut off. Here again let us draw the comparison between the Christian and every other system of religion. The Grecian and the rest of the Pagan histories, exaggerated as they generally are, very rarely mention any instance of martyrdom, in support of a particular doctrine : some indeed of the Gymnosophists (or Indian philosophers) are recorded as instances of this kind ; and Socrates, but very few others, may be added to the number : men however of their consequence and character, may, doubtless fairly be suspected of having been induced, in some degree, to make this sacrifice, by the motives of ambition



ambition and ostentatious pride, and the sure pro-  
 spect of posthumous celebrity. The Christian mar-  
 tyrs, on the other hand, were, in general, men of  
 the most obscure and humble situations in life; wo-  
 men also, and young persons of both sexes, who  
 could neither desire or expect reasonably to immor-  
 talize their names: and indeed it is observable, in  
 the martyrologies, how small is the number of those  
 persons whose names are expressly recorded, in com-  
 parison with the number of those who suffered in  
 the same cause, and who are only mentioned in col-  
 lective and undistinguished heaps. Besides, by any  
 shew of conformity, as by the immaterial act  
 of throwing frankincense upon the altar, the Chris-  
 tians, most of them, had it in their power to obtain  
 remission of their sentence; but this cannot be al-  
 leged in favour of those persons who certainly scrup-  
 led not, in all outward actions, to conform impli-  
 cily to the manners of the people at large, whatever  
 sentiments they inwardly and secretly entertained:  
 the Jews and Christians therefore are, strictly speak-  
 ing, almost the only instances of true and religious  
 martyrdom. Nor even to the Jews can we ascribe  
 this merit, after the commencement of the Christian  
 era; and indeed to few of them before that period,  
 if we only compare them with the Christians; of  
 whom a greater number suffered death in support of  
 their religion within a single province, than the Jews  
 were ever known to do: while at the same time al-  
 most all the Jewish sufferings of this nature, are  
 comprised within the times of Manasses and Anti-  
 chus.

Since therefore in this point also, we perceive the  
 infinite superiority of the Christian religion, it as-  
 sumedly behoveth us to give it the just preference,  
 above all other institutions whatsoever: and we may  
 reasonably



reasonably conclude, further, from the immense multitude of persons, of all ages, nations, sexes, and conditions, who have cheerfully and gloriously fallen in defence of Christianity, that there must have been some great supporting cause of their astonishing perseverance : nor can any other be imagined than the light of truth, and the blessing of God's Holy Spirit.

IN ANSWER TO THOSE WHO DEMAND ADDITIONAL  
AND MORE CONCLUSIVE ARGUMENTS.

IF the arguments hitherto adduced in favour of the Christian religion, should be thought, by any person, insufficient for the purpose of conviction, and still more positive and decisive proof should be required, it ought to be remembered, that the different degrees of proof must depend upon the nature of the different subjects in dispute. There is one kind of proof in mathematical, another in physical, a third in deliberative questions ; and a fourth in regard to facts : in which last kind of question, the judgment must be formed upon plain and unsuspected evidence : for if this sort of proof were deemed inadmissible, all the use of history would instantly vanish ; the science of medicine would in great measure become useless also ; and, as the parent and the child can be mutually known by none other means, all the sacred duties of parental and filial affection would be totally destroyed. God, however, hath thought proper to decree, that those articles, wherein he requireth our implicit faith as a part of that unconditional obedience which we owe to him, should not be made known to us with that degree of certainty which we can obtain in respect to the immediate objects of our senses, or to such questions as admit of mathematical

matical demonstration : it hath pleased him rather  
 to make them only so far discoverable to us, as in  
 reason may suffice to create faith, and to produce  
 conviction, where the mind is not obstinately steeled  
 against the force of it; that so, by the Gospel, as by  
 a touchstone, he may try the temper, and explore the  
 qualities, of the human heart. The arguments that  
 have here been offered, have been found so suffici-  
 ently convincing to many thousands of the wise and  
 virtuous part of mankind, that the observation of  
 this circumstance alone must make it evident to  
 others, that the cause of unbelief consisteth not in  
 the insufficiency of proof, but in the wilful blindness  
 of wicked men, when they are required to admit the  
 truth of any doctrine which militates against their  
 passions: it is difficult, I say, to treat with indiffer-  
 ence and contempt, the dazzling honours and the  
 various allurements of the world; yet this, they  
 know, must be expected of them if they allow the  
 truth of Christianity, and consequently think them-  
 selves bounden to obey the precepts of it. That this  
 is the *real* ground of incredulity we may plainly dis-  
 cover, from the ready credit which they give to ma-  
 ny other historical narrations, supported solely by  
 authoritative power, without any positive marks of  
 their veracity at this day remaining; whereas the  
 writings which relate to Christ, can still produce un-  
 doubted traces of *their* authenticity, as well in the  
 confession of the present Jews, as in the existence of  
 those Christian assemblies which are found in all  
 parts of the world; and which, of necessity must  
 have been established upon some real and original  
 foundation. Since then it is utterly impossible to  
 ascribe to any human power, the wonderful duration  
 and the extensive promulgation of the Christian reli-  
 gion, we must consequently attribute these effects to

the miracles of God, or if these be not admitted; we must surely allow it to exceed all miracles, that a work of this kind, independent of any supernatural assistance, should ever be so lastingly and so universally established.

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## BOOK THE THIRD.

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### CHAP. I.

#### THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOKS WHICH COMPOSE THE NEW TESTAMENT.

**I**F the arguments already offered, or any which might still be added, should be found (as they surely must be) sufficiently conclusive of the superior excellence and truth of Christianity, I would recommend, in the next place, as the means of ample information in every particular, a thorough acquaintance with the most ancient writings which contain that religion; I mean the books of the New Testament, or *Covenant*, as it may more properly be called. It is asserted by every Christian, that the tenets of his religion are comprehended in those books; this, therefore, cannot be disputed without singular injustice; for as we credit the Mahometans in regard to their Alcoran, so ought we in reason, to credit all sects whatsoever, respecting the identity of the books which they declare to comprehend the tenets of their respective systems. Since then the preceding section hath proved incontestably the truth

of

of Christianity; since also it is declared expressly, that these books contain the Christian tenets, the authenticity of the books, by this circumstance alone, is sufficiently established: but if a more particular demonstration be required, we shall previously request the observation of that common rule, which is constantly laid down by all impartial judges; that he who shall presume to attack the authenticity of writings that have stood the test of ages, unsuspected, shall in the first instance be required to take upon himself, positively, the whole labour of the proof, and if he fail therein, that such writings shall be still declared to be authentic, as being of intrinsic and independent authority.

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## CHAP. II.

THE BOOKS WERE ACTUALLY WRITTEN BY  
THEIR REPUTED AUTHORS.

WE conclude, then, that those writings, of which the Christians never entertained a doubt, and to which some nominal author is affixed, are in reality the respective compositions of those authors, by whose names they are distinguished: Justin, Irenæus, Clemens, and other writers, successively extol them under those very titles; and moreover, Tertullian declares, that even the *original manuscripts* themselves, were, some of them, in his time extant: besides, before any general assembly or synod had been holden, they were universally received as such by all the churches. Neither have the Pagans or the Jews

ever urged it, as a ground of controversy, that these books were not the actual compositions of their reputed authors : nay, Julian confesses plainly, that the works which we ascribe to Peter, Paul, Matthew, Mark and Luke, were certainly written, respectively, by those very persons. No man, in his senses, has a doubt of the identity of the works which are attributed to Homer and to Virgil ; because of the perpetual testimony of the Latins in the one instance, and of the Grecians in the other. How much the rather, then, ought we to believe the identity of the authors of these books, when they are supported by the concurrent testimonies of almost every nation in the universe !

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### CHAP. III.

THE AUTHENTICITY OF SOME OF THOSE BOOKS  
WAS FORMERLY, BUT UNJUSTLY, SUSPECTED.

SOME parts of the New Testament, as it now stands, were not originally received in like manner with the rest. -- Such are, for instance, the 2d Epistle of Peter ; the Epistle of James ; and of Jude ; and the 2d and 3d Epistles of John the Elder ; the Apocalypse ; and the Epistle to the Hebrews : still, however, they were so received as to be acknowledged by many of the churches, as appears from the sacred light in which they were considered by the primitive Christians, who appealed to them as to authentic and religious testimonies. It is therefore probable that the churches which did not, at the first, make use of these particular portions of the

New



New Testament, were either totally ignorant of them, or in some degree doubtful of them; but that, afterwards, upon proper information of the truth, they began to receive them as the other churches had done; and consequently we now find them almost universally admitted. It is, moreover, impossible to assign any reasonable inducement to a forgery of this kind, since nothing can be collected from these writings, which is not abundantly comprehended in those other books of the New Testament, which never have been subject to the slightest shadow of suspicion.

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#### C H A P. IV.

THE AUTHORITY OF THOSE BOOKS, WHICH DO NOT SPECIFY THE NAMES, IS ESTABLISHED BY THE QUALITY, OF THE WRITERS.

IT is by no means, in itself, a sufficient ground of disbelief in respect to the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the name of the writer is not precisely known: neither can it be a more reasonable matter of objection against the two Epistles of John, and the Apocalypse, that some have a doubt whether John the Apostle, or another of that name, were the writer of them. The sufficient qualifications of an author, in respect to his veracity and his proper knowledge of the facts related by him, are much more to be attended to than his mere discriminative title. And hence it is, that we regard the information of several historical books, of which the authors are unknown to us: thus, in

the instance of Cæsar's Alexandrian war,\* we read it well assured that, whosoever the writer may have been, he must have been alive at that period, and conversant with those transactions. We ought in like manner to rest satisfied with the proofs which are given us by the authors of the books in question, that they were alive at that early age of Christianity, and endued with the apostolical commission and powers. Now if any person should assert, that these qualifications in this instance may have been counterfeited, and that the very names also which are affixed to the other writings, may have been in like manner, fictitiously assigned, he would assert a most incredible position: viz. that they who instil into our minds, at every word, the earnest love of truth and virtue, have chosen voluntarily and unnecessarily to involve themselves at once in all the guilt of forgery; a crime not only detested by all good men, but even capitally punished by the laws of Rome.

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## C H A P. V.

THESE AUTHORS WROTE THE TRUTH, BECAUSE  
THEY HAD A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF THE  
PARTICULARS, OF WHICH THEY TREATED.

**E**VERY false assertion must either originate from ignorance or from a bad intention; and since it is most clearly evident, that the books of the New

\* The Alexandrian and African wars are generally ascribed to Hirtius, who wrote the 8th book of Cæsar's *Comm. de Bell. Gall.* but Suetonius doubts whether he or Oppius were the author of them.

Testament were written by the persons whose names are prefixed to them, or by men who really were what they profess to be; since, further, it is not less evident, that they knew the particulars which they relate, neither had they any design of telling an untruth, it follows, that their record must be true. Matthew, John, Peter, and Jude, were of the number of the twelve, whom Jesus had selected, that they might more immediately bear witness of his life and doctrine; so that *they* could not possibly be ignorant of the facts which they relate. The same may be said of James, who was either an apostle, or as some will have it, a near kinsman of Jesus, and bishop of Jerusalem by apostolical appointment. Paul could not be suspected of ignorance, in respect to those tenets of Christianity, which he assures us, were revealed unto him from heaven by Jesus Christ himself; neither was it possible that he or Luke, the constant companion of his travels, should be deceived in the particulars that were transacted by himself. Luke moreover, might easily be assured of the truth of his accounts in relation to the life and death of Jesus, having been born in the same part of the world, and having actually travelled through Palæstine; where, as he relates, he conversed with the very persons who had been eye-witnesses of the facts recorded. Exclusively of the apostles, whom he knew intimately, there were, doubtless, many others at that time living, whose infirmities and diseases had been healed by the saving hand of Jesus, and who had seen him as well before his crucifixion as after his resurrection.

If then, relying upon the diligent enquiries of Tacitus and Suetonius, we scruple not to trust them, in regard to the occurrences of times, long prior to their own existence, how much more justly may  
this

this writer challenge our belief, who declares that he derived, personally, the whole of his information from the identical witnesses of the actual transactions.—Mark has always been described as the inseparable companion of Peter, so that his writings may be considered in the same light, as if Peter, who could not be ignorant of those transactions, had dictated the contents of them: besides, almost all the particulars related by Mark, are contained in the accounts which are given us by the apostles—It is equally impossible, that the writer of the Revelation could be deceived in those visions, which he affirms to have been sent down to him from heaven; or that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, should have been deceived in the particulars which he professes to have received, either from the oral instruction of the apostles themselves, or from the blessed inspiration of God's holy spirit.

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## C H A P. VI.

AND BECAUSE THEY HAD NO INTENTION TO  
DECEIVE.

**WE** have in the second place asserted, that the writers of the New Testament had no design in telling an untruth; and this part of our assertion is intimately connected with what we have before observed (see particularly the 6th, 7th, and 10th chapters of the second book) when we undertook to establish generally the truth of the Christian religion and of the resurrection of its divine Author. It is highly just and necessary, that all who shall impeach the validity of an evidence, on the score of intention

deceit

receipt, shall adduce some credible and sufficient reason in support of such impeachment. But in the present instance what reason can possibly be adduced? If it be alleged that the witnesses had an interest in the cause, it will be right to consider in what respect they could have that interest. We cannot, surely, ascribe their conduct to the hopes of any advantage, or to the fears of any danger; because on account of that profession, there was no advantage which they would not forfeit; no danger which they would not undergo. We cannot, therefore, consider it as *their own* cause, except, indeed, in respect to the interest which they had in promoting the worship of the Deity; and this, surely, can induce the assertion of a falsehood in no instance whatever; especially in that, whereupon the eternal salvation of mankind is immediately dependent. The perfect purity of their religious tenets, and the exceptionable tenor of their own lives, which even their most inveterate enemies were unable to arraign in any single instance, make it wholly impossible to suspect them of such consummate wickedness; neither was there ever any ground of objection preferred against them, except that of their simplicity and inexperience; circumstances, above all others, the most likely to produce either an inclination or a power to deceive. In addition to these arguments, it may fairly be supposed that if, in the smallest degree, they had been capable of a breach of faith, they never would have been the voluntary means of according to the latest ages, the instances of their own misconduct and disgrace; as they have been, in respect to their desertion and flight, when Christ was apprehended; and in Peter's repeated denial of Lord.



## CHAP. VII.

THE CREDIBILITY OF THESE AUTHORS DERIVES  
ADDITIONAL CONFIRMATION FROM THE SIGNAL  
MIRACLES THAT WERE PERFORMED BY THEM.

SO far from a just imputation of any breach of faith in the conduct of the Apostles, God himself hath afforded the most illustrious testimonies of their veracity and faithfulness, by the miracles that were performed, according to the confident and public declarations of themselves or their disciples: they scrupled not herein to state expressly the names and other circumstances of persons and of places; so that the civil powers were fully enabled, by the slightest attention and enquiry, to ascertain their veracity, or to detect their impostures. And here, among the rest, the constant and public assertions which they made, in respect to their immediate and familiar use of every language, previously unknown to them, before many thousands of men "out of every nation under heaven;" their assertions also, in respect to the instantaneous cures administered in the sight of all the people to corporeal infirmities: these instances, I say are proofs of their veracity, which deserve our particular observation. They knew, but they disdained to fear, the inveterate hatred of the Jewish magistrates at that period, and the active severity of Roman prejudice against them: so that both the Jewish and the Roman nation, considering these men as the authors of a new religion, were likely to neglect no ground of criminal accusation that could possibly be brought against them. Still, however, neither Jews nor Pagans,

the times immediately subsequent to those transactions, ever dared to deny that miracles were performed by the Apostles. Nay, Phlegon, the freed-man of the Emperor Adrian, hath recorded in his Annals the miracles of Peter; and the Christians themselves, in the books wherein they justify the motives of their faith to the Emperors, the senate, and the governors, assert these facts as matters of the most perfect notoriety, and of the most undoubted authenticity. They even publicly affirm, that a miraculous virtue remained inherent in their sepulchres, for some ages after their decease, though they must have been aware of the easy detection to which such a declaration, if false, would be exposed, and of the disgrace and punishment which they would consequently bring upon themselves. So frequently however, and so numerously attested were the miracles performed at the sepulchres above mentioned, that they have extorted even from Porphyrius an acknowledgement of their reality. The arguments already offered *ought*, doubtless, to suffice, but others in abundance concur with them, in recommending the New Testament to our full and implicit confidence.

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### C H A P. VIII.

AS THE TRUTH OF THEIR WRITINGS DOTH, FROM THE MANY PARTICULARS CONTAINED IN THEM, WHICH THE EVENT HATH PROVED TO HAVE BEEN DERIVED FROM DIVINE REVELATION.

**N**UMEROUS are the prophecies observable in those writings, which human knowledge, of itself, could never have attained, and which, in an  
 I amazi n

amazing manner, are eventually accomplished : such for example are the prophecies importing the sudden and extensive propagation of Christianity ; the perpetual duration of it ; the rejection of it, generally speaking, by the Jews ; the reception which it was to meet with among the Gentiles ; the hatred which the Jews manifested against the professors of it ; the persecutions and extreme cruelties to be endured by those professors ; the siege and destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem ; the singular calamities of the Jewish nation.

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## C H A P. IX.

THEN AGAIN, FROM THE CARE WHICH GOD  
WOULD THINK IT EXPEDIENT TO TAKE ON  
THIS OCCASION, TO PREVENT ALL FALSE  
AND SUPPOSITIOUS WRITINGS.

**I**F, moreover, we admit the interposition of a Divine Providence in the affairs of men, in those affairs especially which immediately concern the honour and worship of the Deity, it is impossible to suppose that that Providence should ever have allowed so many millions of men (whose only design was to do God service) to be deceived by the writings of impostors. It is, further, an argument of no inconsiderable weight in proof of the total deficiency of all just objections against these books, that we find hardly any single sect, among the many to which Christianity gave birth, *refusing* to receive them all, or at least the greatest part of them, with very few and immaterial exceptions ; although, at the same time, such violent degrees of mutual animosity subsisted between those sects, that whatsoever was ap-  
proved

proved by any one of them, was for that single, but sufficient reason, disapproved by all the rest.

## C H A P. X.

IT IS ABSURDLY OFFERED, IN OBJECTION, THAT SOME MEN REJECTED MANY OF THESE BOOKS.

THERE were some indeed, but very few, among those who were willing to be accounted Christians, who nevertheless thought proper to reject such books of the New Testament, as seemed to militate against those tenets which they exclusively adopted. Such were they, who either through their hatred of the Jews, were accustomed, on the one hand, to blaspheme the God of Israel, the Maker of the world, and to abuse the Jewish law; or, through a base fear of the misfortunes to which the Christians were exposed, were, on the other hand, anxious to conceal themselves beneath the cloak of Judaism, because the profession of that religion was admitted without molestation. These very persons, however, were universally disowned by all other Christians, even during that period, when as yet all differences of opinion were tolerated with great charity and forbearance, according to the express apostolical injunctions, without the imputation of heresy \* or irreligion. The vile corrupters of Christianity, to whom we *first* alluded, are sufficiently refuted, we conceive, by the arguments which proved, in a for-

\* This passage will derive additional force from the consideration that Grotius, when he wrote it, was under the cruel sentence of perpetual imprisonment.



mer part of this undertaking (see book i. chap. 3. and seq.) the existence of one true God, the Creator of the whole universe : and indeed, the very books that are received by these heretics, in order to preserve in some degree the appearance of Christians, make it fully evident, as we see especially in the Gospel of St. Luke, that the same God, whom Moses and the Hebrews worshipped, was preached also by Jesus Christ.—We shall find a proper opportunity to refute those of the second denomination, when we shall commence our attack upon all descriptions of Judaism whatsoever, as well real as ostensible.—In the mean time, I cannot help observing the astonishing impudence of those who would depreciate the authority of St. Paul ; when there was not one of the apostles who founded a greater number of Christian churches than himself ; not one, by whom so many miracles were said to have been done at that very period, when, as we have just before observed, the truth of the facts might have been easily ascertained or denied. Now if he really wrought miracles, how can we reasonably question the veracity of his relation in respect to the visions which appeared to him from heaven, and the commission which he received from Christ ? And then it unavoidably follows, that, if Christ bestowed on him such distinguished tokens of divine favour, he could not possibly have been a promoter of any doctrine displeasing to Christ, as all *false* doctrines must certainly have been. The dispensation that was given to the Jews, releasing them from their observance of the formal rites and ceremonies which the Mosaic institution had commanded, was the sole ground of objection against Paul ; but what other motive than the force of truth could induce Paul to preach that dispensation, since he himself had undergone



undergone the ceremony of circumcision, and was for the most part a voluntary observer of the Jewish law: he was, moreover, at all times prepared in his own person, for the service of Christianity, to perform greater difficulties than any which that law enjoined him, and to endure greater hardships than any to which that law exposed him: his disciples likewise, by his authority and example, were instructed to act and suffer like himself. Hence then it is evident, that he sought not to please the ear or consult the convenience of his audience; when, instead of the observance of the sabbath only, he taught them "to continue *daily* in the temple;" instead of the trifling charges which their law imposed upon them, he taught them to bear patiently the loss of every earthly possession whatsoever: and instead of the sacrifice of the blood of bulls and of goats, he taught them to dedicate even their own blood, to the service of their God. Paul himself also openly affirms, that "when Peter, and John, and James, perceived the grace that was given to him, they gave to him the right hand of fellowship;" and this assertion, if it had been false, he never could have dared to utter, as those very men were at that time still living, and consequently able to convict him of a downright falsehood. Exclusively then of these two particular descriptions of men above-mentioned, who can scarcely be accounted Christians; in consideration also of our late remarks upon the miracles performed by the writers of the New Testament; in consideration, further, of the special interference of God's providence in affairs of this nature; on these additional accounts, I say, the very ready reception which these books *universally* met with from the many remaining Christian sects, ought certainly to entitle them to a sufficient claim upon the faith of all

impartial persons; for all other histories whatsoever, though unsupported by testimonies like these, are constantly received as authentic, unless some strong ground of positive objection can be alledged against them; and not a single shadow of any fair objection arises, we are well assured, against the books in question.

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### C H A P. XI.

IT IS WITH EQUAL ABSURDITY ALLEDGED THAT THESE BOOKS CONTAIN FACTS WHICH ARE IMPOSSIBLE.

**I**N respect to the supposed impossibilities contained in these books; that objection, if it should be made, must fall immediately to the ground; since it hath been already shewn that there are certain things, which, though they be *with men* totally impossible, are nevertheless easily possible with God; that is to say, those things which do not in themselves imply a contradiction: and since it hath been also shewn that those particular objects of our greatest admiration, the exertions of a supernatural power, and the restoration of the dead to life, are among other things, *within* that description.

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### C H A P. XII.

OR INCONSISTENT WITH REASON.

**N**OR are those cavillers more entitled to our attention, who assert these books to be incompatible with the principles of right reason: an assertion

tion of this kind is in the first place, refuted by the infinite number of able and wise persons, in all ages, who have, from the very earliest period, implicitly relied on their authority. Then again, whatsoever points of doctrine we have proved to be consistent with right reason, in the first part of this work; the existence, for example, of a Deity; his unity, his infinite perfection, his eternity, his attributes of unbounded power, and wisdom, and goodness; the proofs also that *that* Deity created all things; that he extendeth his providence over all his works, and over man especially; that he is able, even after this life to reward the faithful and obedient; that it is incumbent upon us to curb our passions; that all men are related to each other as the children of one father; that all men ought, consequently, to "love one another;"—all these doctrinal points, I say, are abundantly and explicitly contained in the New Testament. To assert any thing, beyond these, as certain and infallible, respecting the nature or the will of the Deity, by the sole guidance of human reason, is sufficiently shewn to be an attempt of danger and uncertainty, as well by the many jarring determinations of scholastic disputants, as by the self-contradictory opinions of particular philosophers. Nor is this a matter of surprise; for if men fall into opinions so erroneous and so widely different in respect to the nature of their own souls, how much more unavoidable it is, that they should err, when they attempt in any instance to define the nature of that Supreme Being, so infinitely above the reach of human comprehension! The skilful politician declares the danger and absurdity of attempting to investigate the counsels of kings: where then is the man whose penetration is sufficient to justify a hope of his success in discovering, by his own casual conjecture

ture, the counsels of the King of kings, in respect to the disposal of those things, over which his authority is absolute and independent? Wisely then was it affirmed by Plato, 'that the will of the gods can never be attained by man without an express oracular declaration of that will.' No oracular declaration however can possibly be produced, the reality of which can be established by more authentic testimonies, than those which are contained in the books of the New Testament. It hath not been asserted even, much less hath it been proved, that God hath ever communicated unto mankind any particulars of his own nature, repugnant to the tenor of these books: nor can any *later* intimation of his will be produced, to which our credit can be reasonably given. Then as to the observance of any practices or customs, which were either manifestly immaterial, not absolutely necessary, or not positively wrong, and which nevertheless were commanded or allowed before the Christian æra: in things, I say, of this description, there certainly can be nothing repugnant to the doctrine of the New Testament, for, in matters of this nature all former laws are virtually repealed by those of a later institution.

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C H A P. XXI.

THE INCONSISTENCIES WHICH MAY BE FOUND IN THESE BOOKS, AFFORD NO JUST GROUND OF OBJECTION AGAINST THEIR AUTHENTICITY.

THE occasional points of difference which are here and there observable, in the sense of certain passages, are so far from being, as some are apt



to make them, any ground of objection against the books of the New Testament, that they must, on the other hand, be allowed by every impartial judge, to be so many additional arguments in their favour. The writers of these books unanimously and universally agree, upon all *material* points of doctrine or of history, in the clearest manner possible: in a manner no where else observable among writers of any single sect or profession whatsoever; whether Jews, Grecian philosophers: physicians, or Roman lawyers. These all of them, nay even persons of the same sect (as Xenophon and Plato were) are not only chargeable with numberless contradictions of *each other*, but also with frequent contradictions of *themselves*; as if they had forgotten what they had asserted; or knew not what they should assert. The writers in question, on the other hand, inculcate always the same articles of faith, enjoin always the same moral duties, and give always exactly the same account, in every main point, of the life, and death, and resurrection of Christ. Then in regard to the trifling and immaterial points of difference which occur in them, these, very possibly, may be capable of receiving an easy and exact reconciliation, although we, through the similiar events of different periods, the ambiguity and plurality of the names of men and places, and through other causes of the like nature, may be unable to discover the means of reconciling them. Nay, these very points of difference ought alone sufficiently to vindicate these writers from every suspicion of imposture, because it is the constant practice of *false* witnesses, to concur by previous agreement to exactly in their several depositions, that there may not exist, even in appearance, the faintest colour of a difference. Besides, if any light, yet totally irreconcilable, matter of a disagreement,



agreement, were sufficient to destroy the credit of whole books, there would not be a single book, especially in historical matters, which could ever be read with the smallest degree of confidence. Since, however, in the essential matter of their respective histories, we allow the authenticity of Polybius, of Dionysius, of Livy, and of Plutarch, although we detect them in certain incoherent passages; how much more reasonable it is, that a circumstance of this kind should not be suffered to invalidate our confidence in men, who were always, as their writings prove them, the strictest and most diligent adherents to piety and *truth*.

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#### C H A P    XIV.

THE TESTIMONIES OF FOREIGN NATIONS CONFIRM, RATHER THAN DISPROVE, THE AUTHORITY OF THESE BOOKS.

**BUT** however a question may be supported by evidence on the one side, there yet remains a possible mode of refutation, by external testimonies adduced on the other. No such testimonies however in the present instance, I am bold to say, can possibly be found; unless indeed it should be thought allowable to consider in that light, the assertions of men who were not born till long after the events; of men too, by no means entitled to appear as witnesses herein, because of their open and declared aversion from the cause of Christianity. The very reverse of this objection is however, in the present case the truth, for we frequently find (although this

this additional proof be not wanted) the collateral evidence of other books, strongly confirming particular parts of the accounts of the New Testament. Thus, for example, the crucifixion of Jesus, and the miracles performed by him and by his disciples, are at once recorded by the Hebrews and the Pagans. The celebrated writings of Josephus, published about forty years after Christ's ascension, and extant at this present day, make mention of Herod, and of Pilate; of Festus, of Felix, of John the Baptist, of Gamaliel, and of the destruction of Jerusalem: with these also agree the accounts which are received among the Talmudists, in relation to the period above-mentioned. The cruel persecutions of the Christians under Nero, have been transmitted to posterity by Tacitus: books also have in former times been extant, (as well private compositions, like that of Phlegon, as general compilations, like the public acts to which the Christians frequently appealed) establishing by their concurrent testimony the truth of our accounts, in respect to the appearance of the star at the nativity of Christ; as well as of the earthquake, and preternatural eclipse of the sun, when the moon was at the full, about the time of our Saviour's crucifixion.

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## C H A P. XV.

THE SCRIPTURES NEVER HAVE BEEN CHANGED  
OR ALTERED.

WHAT further can be offered in objection to these books, in truth I know not; unless perhaps it may be said with that design, that they have not remained always, as they were originally written.

ten. They have been exposed, I must confess, as all other books have been, and have suffered by having been exposed, to that inattention as well as awkwardness, which, in a variety of copies, must naturally render unavoidable some casual omissions, additions and changes in particular letters, syllables and words. Nevertheless, because of any difference of this kind, which in a long series of years could not fail to arise among the copies, it surely were unjust to controvert the validity of such a record of book as the New Testament; when we are at once directed, in these cases, as well by custom as by reason, to prefer uniformly *that* reading which is supported by the most numerous and most ancient copies! To say that *all* the copies were corrupted, by wilful design or by any other means, (and *that* too in any of the material points of doctrine or of history,) is a mere assertion incapable of proof; neither is it supported by any later record, or by any witnesses living at the time. And as to the assertions of men, who, as we have just observed, were born long after the events, and who openly declared the most inveterate hatred to the Christian name; these surely cannot be considered in the light of impartial evidence, but in that of prejudiced and malicious calumny. Enough then hath been already said, to silence that objection which attacks the *identity* of the scriptures; because, in an assertion of this nature, especially when levelled at a scripture so long and so extensively established, the whole business of the proof may be fairly thrown upon the assailant. Still however, in order to expose further the absurdity of that assertion, we will prove, affirmatively that this pretended fact of theirs is not only false but impossible. In a former chapter we have shown incontestably, that these respective books were read

written

written by their reputed authors; and if this position be admitted, it follows unavoidably that they are not supposititious. Then again I affirm, that no material change has taken place in them. A change of that sort must have been made with some design, and must have produced some considerable disagreement between the part so changed and the other passages and books which did not undergo the same alteration. Now this disagreement is no where visible. On the contrary, as we have before remarked, that perfect and universal harmony so prevalent throughout, is not more wonderful than it is observable. Besides, whenever any work was first published, either by the apostles or by others under their commission, the zealous piety of the Christians, and their anxious desire of transmitting the entire truth to their posterity, would doubtless prompt them to preserve frequent copies of it for themselves: which copies, consequently, were dispersed, as far as the Christian name extended, throughout Europe, Asia, and Egypt, where the Greek language was in use; nay, even some of the original manuscripts themselves, as we remarked in the second chapter of this book, were extant at the close of the second century. Any book, therefore, so repeatedly transcribed, so extensively circulated, and so carefully preserved, as well by the private care of individuals as by the general protection of the churches, was utterly exempted from the possibility of an interpolation. We are to remember also, that, in the ages immediately subsequent to that period, the books of the New Testament were translated into the Syriac, the Æthiopian,\* the Arabic, and the Latin tongues:

\* Under this appellation the Chaldeans and Phœnicians were described by the ancients. Strab.



these versions are at this day extant; neither do they differ, in *any one material point*, from the Greek original. Then again, we have the writings of those men who received their information either from the apostles themselves, or from their disciples; and these we find exactly corresponding, in frequent quotations from these books, with the modern acceptance of their meaning. Besides, an individual member of the church in those times, was never possessed of authority sufficient to enforce his commands, had he wished and endeavoured to introduce an innovation: this we may collect very plainly from the free and open manner in which Irenæus, Tertullian and Cyprian dissented from the most eminent men in the Christian church. In the times subsequent to those of which we have been speaking, many characters arose, of the highest eminence in learning and in judgment; these, all of them, after a strict examination of the subject, received and embraced these books, as remaining still in their original purity. Applicable in this place, is the same observation which we lately made upon the different sects of Christianity; that all of them, at least all which acknowledge God as the Creator of the universe, and Christ as the Author of a new law, receive and use the New Testament as it is established among us. Now if any of them had discovered an intention of making an interpolation, the rest would have accused them of an act of forgery. Besides, that no sect ever rose to such a pitch of licentious proceedings, as to alter and adapt, at will, the purport of these books to their own particular tenets, is sufficiently apparent from this single observation; that all of them deduce, severally, from this very source, their arguments against the rest. Nor less applicable, upon this occasion, as well to the material



rial passages as to the books at large, is the hint which we have already given, in respect to the Divine Providence ; (see chap. ix ) wherein we represented the inconsistent part which the Deity would be supposed to act, were we to believe him capable of suffering so many millions of devout and pious men, who were seeking with the utmost earnestness the means of their eternal salvation, to be betrayed into an error which they could not possibly avoid.

Suffice, then, what hath been advanced in defence of the books of the New Testament : books, amply sufficient, of themselves (were they *alone* extant) to lead us to the certain knowledge of the true religion.

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## CH A P. XVI.

### THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

**A**ND now, since God hath graciously thought fit to leave in our possessions the records of the Jewish, which was once the true, religion, and which still remains a testimony of no inconsiderable consequence in the cause of Christianity ; it will not be improper to establish also, in this place, the title which *they* have to our belief. That the books of the Old Testament were respectively written by their reputed authors, is a fact that will admit of the same degree of proof as we have already given in relation to the New. Now these reputed authors were either prophets, or men equally entitled to our

fullest confidence, from their singular integrity. Such was Esdras,\* for example, who, while the prophets Aggai, Malachi, and Zechariah, were still living, is said to have collected all the sacred writings into one volume. I shall not here repeat what hath been said in recommendation of Moses; (b i. c. 15 ) but while *his* earlier history, as we have already shewn, is supported by numerous vouchers from the class of Pagan writers, the sacred historians of a later period are by no means less so: thus did the Phœnician annals make mention of the names of David and Solomon, and of the leagues into which they entered with the Tyrians. And Berosus made as frequent mention as the Hebrew accounts have done, of Nabuchodonosor and other kings of the Chaldæans. The Ægyptian king Vaphres, as Jeremiah calls him, is the same with Apries mentioned by Herodotus. The Grecian histories abound with the names of all the Persian kings, from Cyrus the first, to Darius (Codomanus) the last emperor of the Persian monarchy. Josephus also, in his writings against Appion, adduces many other particulars in relation to the Jews; to which might be added, further, our former quotations from Strabo and Trogus Pompeius. It is, however, altogether impossible, that we Christians, as we profess to be, should ever call in question for a moment the credit of those books, when the proofs of a continual and almost universal reference from the books of the Christian, to those of the Jewish dispensation, are *in the former*, so expressly apparent. Christ, when he reprimanded, upon various accounts the doctors of the

\* Esdras, about the year 449 before Christ restored the law of Moses to the Jews, was therefore called the second Moses, and collected the holy scriptures. The Jews, after this, enjoyed a long peace, under a sacerdotal form of government.

Jewish law, and the Pharisees of his own time, never once complained of any wilful or ignorant falsehoods, practised either by themselves or others, in regard to the books of Moses and the prophets: and, *after his departure*, if we will consider duly the extensive or rather the universal dispersion of the Jews, who, whithersoever they were driven, still carefully preserved and jealously protected those books, we shall find the supposition as unworthy of credit, as it is otherwise incapable of proof, that any corruptions can ever have obtained in the material passages of scripture. In the first place we are to remember the abduction of the ten tribes, (by Salmanasar king of Assyria, about the year 721 bef. Ch.) and afterwards that of the two remaining tribes; by Nebuchadnezzar, the second of that name, king of Babylon about the year 598 bef. Ch.) Of these, when Cyrus after 70 years had restored them to liberty and allowed them to return, many settled in foreign countries. Thousands of them, were prevailed upon by the advantageous offers of the Macedonians, to migrate to Alexandria. The cruelty of Antiochus, the civil dissensions of the Hasmonæans,\* the foreign wars of Pompey and of Sossius, dispersed great numbers of them. The country of Cyrene, the cities of Asia, Macedonia, and Lycaonia, the islands Cyprus, Crete, and others; all these, I say abounded with Jews. The immense numbers of them which lived at Rome, may even be collected from Horace, from Juvenal, and from Martial. Scattered, therefore, and dispersed as they

\* The dissensions of the chief Jews for the priesthood had not been long settled by Ptolemy Philometor king of Egypt, when Simon the high priest, obtained the royal power; with whom began the new kingdom of the Jews, otherwise called the *Hasmonæans*.

were, no deceit could possibly be practised upon them all; neither were they able for the same reasons to contrive on *their* part any general plan of imposition. We are further to remember, that through the care and attention of the kings of Egypt, the Hebrew original was translated into Greek by the Seventy Interpreters, as they are called, almost three hundred years before our Saviour.\* At that period, therefore, the scriptures became likewise in the possession of the Greeks; in a different language, it is true; yet still in point of sense nearly, if not entirely, the same. Hence were they again rendered *still less liable* to any alteration. Translations also were afterwards produced in the Chaldaean and Semi-Syriac languages; the latter of which was the language of Jerusalem. Of these translations some were almost immediately precedent, others almost immediately subsequent, to the coming of our Saviour. Then followed the other Greek versions of Aquila, of Symmachus, and of Theodotion, wherein, when Origen and others after him, conferred them with that of the 70 interpreters, no difference in point of historical fact and indeed no material difference of any kind, was ever observable. Philo, who flourished in the reign of Caligula; and Josephus, who lived still later, to the days of Vespasian and Titus; these, both of them, cite the same passages, as we read them at this day, from the books of the Hebrews. Christianity, moreover, began at this period to extend itself daily; and this very religion was embraced by many of

\* Ptolomy Philadelphus, in particular, about the year 277 bef. Ch: ordered the scriptures to be translated into Greek by the *seventy* interpreters, or *Septuagint*, as they are generally stiled; though strictly speaking their number amounted to *seventy-two*; i. e. *six* persons out of each tribe.



of the Hebrew nation : many also, who were not Jews, had learnt the Hebrew language. These therefore, if in any material part, I say, the Jews had admitted any falsehood, would doubtless have been ready to detect and expose the innovation, as they might easily have done, by comparing the suspected passage with that of earlier editions. We do not, however, find this to be the case in any single instance ; nay, in all their quotations from the Old Testament, they plainly and continually agree with the Hebrew acceptation of the same passages ; now the Hebrews we may well imagine, might sooner be convicted of any crime whatsoever, than of that, I will not say of wilful deceit, but of casual neglect, in regard to these books ; since they actually were used to copy and compare them with such reverential care, such scrupulous exactness, that they even numbered the several repetitions of every particular letter.—One additional argument, of no despicable force, to exculpate the Jews, from the charge of having purposely altered the holy scriptures, I shall here take occasion to offer in conclusion ; by observing, that, from the very same books which are read and received by all the Jews, the Christians also, as they trust, *incontestably*, do prove their own master Jesus Christ to be that very Messiah who was promised of old to the forefathers of the Jewish nation. The possibility of such a proof the Jews, no doubt, would have prevented to the utmost, when dissensions had arisen between them and the Christians, if they ever had been able to alter, as they thought proper, the passages of holy writ.



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 BOOK THE FOURTH.
 

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## CHAP. I.

 A PARTICULAR REFUTATION OF THE SEVERAL  
 RELIGIONS WHICH DIFFER FROM THE CHRIS-  
 TIAN.

**T**HERE is a certain selfish satisfaction, very generally prevalent in the human breast, arising from the sight of others in a state of danger, when we ourselves are placed above the reach of it: from this consideration, I design, in the present book, to shew, that the main business of a Christian in this life, ought indispensably to be of such a nature, that he may not only congratulate with himself, as far as he is personally concerned, upon his own discovery of the way of truth, but that he may extend also to others yet wandering in the mazes of error and perplexity, the benefits of that discovery, and may render them partakers of so great a blessing. This we have already in some measure attempted in the preceding books, inasmuch as every demonstration of truth includeth, virtually, a refutation of error. Since, however, each particular religion opposed to Christianity (the Pagan, for example, the Mahometan, and the Jewish) since each of these, I say, exclusive of the errors which they have in common, has others also peculiar to itself, and usually meets us upon certain singular and distinct grounds

of argument, it will not, I believe, be thought foreign or digressive, to institute a special discussion of the subject with each of them; bespeaking solely the candid attention of our readers, totally unbiassed by any previous study, unprejudiced by any inveterate habit, (for these I consider as impediments to a *perfect judgment*) that so they may attain a more competent understanding, and form thereupon a more just determination of the point in question.

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## CHAP. II.

AND FIRST, A REFUTATION OF PAGANISM, BY THE PROOF OF ONE SOLE GOD.—CREATED SPIRITS ARE EITHER GOOD OR BAD: BUT EVEN THE GOOD ARE ENTITLED TO NO WORSHIP, UNLESS IT BE PRESCRIBED BY THE SUPREME BEING.

IN the first place, then, as a full and ample confutation of that absurd idea, the Pagan plurality of gods eternal and co-eternal, we appeal to the doctrine established in the very beginning of this work, respecting the existence of One God, the sole and universal Cause —If, however, the Pagans apply the appellation of *gods* to those created spirits which are superior to man, they must necessarily call them either good or evil. If they call them good, they ought first carefully to ascertain the propriety of the appellation, lest haply they commit a dangerous mistake by receiving enemies as friends, and treacherous deserters as faithful ambassadors: they ought

secondly,

secondly, to consider how reasonable and requisite it is, that some manifest distinction should be made between the Supreme Deity and these inferior beings, in the act of religious worship: they ought to understand, further, the relation and order of these beings in respect to each other; the particular good to be expected from them severally; and the determinate portion of divine honour allowed to each of them by their supreme ruler. From the total deficiency of the Pagans in all these necessary points of information, we may plainly perceive how doubtful and ignorant they are in every particular of their religion; we may see too, how much more safely they would act, if they would entirely transfer their adoration to its only proper object, the sole Sovereign of heaven and of earth! this, even Plato hath declared to be incumbent upon every wise man; and the more so, doubtless, we shall think it, if we only will consider, that, as the good spirits are at best no more than humble attendants upon the will of the most high God, whosoever obtaineth the gracious favour of the latter, cannot fail to secure the devoted service of the former.

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### CH A P. III.

WHEREAS EVEN THE WORSHIPPING OF EVIL SPIRITS IS PROVED TO BE THE PRACTICE OF THE PAGANS: A PRACTICE UTTERLY DISGRACEFUL AND IMPIOUS.

**I**T is sufficiently evident, however, that the objects of the Pagan worship were not good, but evil spirits. In the first place, so far from referring their worshippers

worshippers to the adoration of the Supreme God, they abolished *all* adoration of him to the utmost of their power; or chose at least to give themselves in every respect, an *equal* degree of worship. In the next place, they injured and oppressed as much as possible the worshippers of the One Supreme Being, by exciting against them the power of the magistrates and the passions of the people. The poets recorded with impunity the acts of murder and adultery which had been committed by the Pagan deities; the Epicureans denied, without molestation, the interposition of a providence; in short, every religion or sect whatsoever, the *Ægyptian*, the *Phrygian*, the *Grecian* forms of worship; the *Tuscan* rites and mysteries of *Rome*; all these, I say, how different and opposite so ever, were readily allowed and tolerated. The *Jews* alone (as we may perceive from the satires and epigrams of those poets) were a constant and universal subject of derision: sometimes, indeed, they were even driven into banishment. The *Christians* moreover were sentenced to the cruellest and severest punishments; nor can any other reason be assigned, possibly, for the rigid treatment of these two sects, than that of their adherence to the worship of *One God*: which worship the Pagan deities, jealous rather of him, than of *each other*, counteracted and opposed by every endeavour. In the third place, the modes of worship were of a nature little suited to a Being of goodness and of purity: Human sacrifices; naked races up and down the temples; games and dances replete with obscenity: instances whereof are seen even at this day among the savage natives of *America* and *Africa*, who are still lost in the thick clouds of Paganism. *Some* nations, moreover, undoubtedly have been and are still known to be avowed

ed and intentional worshippers of *evil spirits*. The Persians, for example, had their Arimanius; the Grecians their Cacodæmons; the Romans their Vevjoves; and certain Æthiopians and Indians worship others at this day. Proceedings more impious cannot possibly be imagined! For what is all religious worship, but a testimony and acknowledgment of the highest goodness inherent in the object to which it is addressed! when offered therefore to an evil spirit, it is an act of falsehood and hypocrisy; nay it is an act of absolute rebellion, whereby we not only deprive our legal sovereign of his just homage, but even transfer that homage to a base apostate and an open enemy! Some indeed are weak enough to imagine, that God as a being of infinite goodness, will never be provoked to punish this rebellion; a spirit of revenge, say they, is wholly incompatible with the attribute of perfect goodness. A fatal and absurd idea this! the powers of mercy must be limited, that her actions may be just; and when wickedness becomes excessive, punishment as it were unavoidably arises out of justice. Others again, not less absurdly, attempt to palliate their iniquity in worshipping, by their cowardice in fearing evil spirits. But God, who is of a nature infinitely good, is also of a nature infinitely communicative; and consequently every other nature is produced by him. It follows then, that God hath an absolute authority over all natures whatsoever; they being, as it were, "the works of his hands," so that not one of them can forcibly counteract or contradict his will. Hence then, it is easy to collect, that whosoever enjoyeth the favour and protection of Almighty God infinitely great and infinitely good, hath nothing to apprehend from all the powers of darkness; since they only are able to prevail against him, as God himself



himself, for some good purpose, may think fit to suffer them. Nothing, moreover, can our prayers obtain from evil spirits, which we ought not to reject utterly; for vice, beneath the mask of virtue, is then most dangerous; and the gifts of an enemy are "a deceitful snare."

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#### CHAP. IV.

##### AGAINST THE PAGAN WORSHIP OF MEN AFTER DEATH.

**T**HERE have been and there still are Pagans, who professedly worship the spirits of departed men. Now here again it were in the first place highly requisite, that a plain and manifest distinction should be made between the worship of these spirits, and that of the Supreme Deity. To offer up our prayers to them is a gross absurdity, unless they have a power of granting our requests. Of this however their worshippers are by no means assured; neither have they any single reason to believe, rather than deny, the existence of that power. But the most shocking consideration of all is, that the very persons thus deified are found to have been eminent and notorious in the practice of the greatest vices. Bacchus was addicted to the love of wine; Hercules to the love of women; Romulus was guilty of an impious act against his brother; and Jupiter against his father: so that the worshipping of *them* is, in fact, the dishonouring of the true God, and the greatest affront which we can offer to that holiness wherein he delighteth; while it affords at the

same time, as an additional encouragement to vices sufficiently alluring of themselves, the plausible pretext of religion.

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## CHAP. V.

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### AGAINST THE WORSHIP WHICH WAS PAID TO THE STARS AND ELEMENTS.

**T**HE worshipping of the heavenly bodies and of the elements, as we call them, of fire, water, earth, and air, is a still more ancient practice, but a very considerable error, in the Pagan system of religion. Prayer constitutes the chief and principal article of religious worship, but how, without the greatest absurdity, can prayer be addressed to any other than intelligent beings? That the elements are not of this description, is in some degree a sensible and obvious proposition: and any assertion of a contrary nature with respect to the description of the heavenly bodies, were at best an assertion without proof. Their operations, whereby they indicate their natures, will afford no argument in support of it; nay the very reverse of the assertion is sufficiently evident from the appointed and determinate course to which the heavenly bodies are confined, instead of that variety of motion which free and independent beings would adopt.—It hath already been demonstrated in a former chapter, that the courses of the heavenly bodies are adapted to the use and benefit of man; hence, therefore, man surely should discover that he approacheth, in his better part, to a nearer resemblance of the Deity than they; that he standeth in a higher estimation with

with his Maker; and consequently ought to know that a servile subjection to those objects which God hath given for his service, is highly derogatory from the dignity of his nature: rather is it his duty on the other hand, to offer up to God thanksgivings and praise on their account, which they either are unable or uninstructed to offer for themselves.

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## C H A P. VI.

### AGAINST THE WORSHIPPING OF BRUTE ANIMALS.

A Practice, into which some nations (the *Ægyptians* in particular) have fallen, is that of worshipping the various insensate animals, which form the brute creation. A practice, of all others, the most disgraceful to human nature! Some of them, indeed, occasionally discover in their actions a certain shadow, as it were, of intellectual reasoning; nevertheless, if we compare it with the faculties of man, that very shadow becomes instantly unfeeling, if not forgotten, as it neither can enable them to articulate or describe the ideas that arise within them; they still, we see, remain incapable of performing different kinds of actions; they still remain unable even to perform the same actions after different manners; much less can they ever attain to any knowledge of numbers, of geometrical proportions, or of astronomical observations — Man, on the other hand, by the ingenuity of his nature, circumvents and overpowers every kind of animal, however furious and strong; “the wild beasts of the field; the fowls of the air; and the fishes of the sea.” He even subjects them, in some instances to his service and obe-

dience; the elephant for example, the lion, the horse and the ox: he derives even from the most noxious animals a benefit to himself, as by acquiring the means of health from the very vipers themselves. One general benefit moreover, of which they are utterly insensible, he certainly derives from all of them; by his capacity to examine and observe the formation of their bodies, and the disposition of their respective parts; comparing, at the same time, as well the species as the genus of one animal with another, and hence acquiring also the knowledge of his own superior excellence, from the nobler and more perfect structure of the *human* frame; whosoever will consider these particulars, will be so far from worshipping other animals as gods, that he will rather imagine *himself* a kind of Deity, as it were, appointed over *them*, in subordination to the great and Supreme Governor of all things!

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## C H A P. VII.

### AGAINST THE WORSHIP OF IDEAL AND IM-MATERIAL OBJECTS.

**W**E find it recorded of the Grecians, the Romans and others, that they worshipped things that have no real existence, but are only accidental effects produced by other causes. To say nothing of those creatures of their barbarous imagination, their *Febris*, their *Impudentia*, and other similar deities, I shall only observe, that *Health*, which they revered as a goddess, is, in fact, neither more or less than a due and proper temper of the parts and organs of the body; so again, good fortune is no more than a similarity or concurrence of the actual event with that



that which was anxiously desired. The passions, in like manner, of love, fear, anger, hope, and other similar affections, which arise from the consideration of any good or evil, any favourable or unfavourable, circumstance, are nothing more than certain emotions occasioned in the *heart*; for *there* in particular, by means of the blood, the soul is most intimately connected with the body; these affections, therefore, are not free and independent, but subject entirely to the *will*, which acts, as it were, like a mistress over them, at least as far as may pertain to their duration and direction. The virtues, under all their different denominations, that of prudence in the choice of what is useful, that of fortitude in a state of danger, that of justice in abstaining from another's property, that of temperance in the moderate enjoyment of pleasure, these, I say, and others like these, are certain inclinations towards goodness, which grow up within us by long exercise and habit; and as on the one hand they are capable of constant improvement, so, on the other, they may be diminished by neglect, and may even become utterly extinct within the mind of man. Honour (for to *this* also we find temples dedicated) is nothing but the decision of other men upon the actions of any individual whom they consider as endued with virtue. This, consequently, from the natural fallibility and erroneous determinations of man, is often given to the unworthy, and withholden from the worthy.—These things, therefore, as they have no real existence, and as, on that account, they cannot be compared, in point of excellence, with the things which *do exist*, can neither be sensible of any prayer, or conscious of any adoration that is offered to them: to worship them as deities then, is an action altogether foreign to every principle of reason; while at the same time it is our indispensable duty, on account of these qualities,



qualities, to reverence *that Being*, who is able to bestow and to preserve them by his gracious benediction.

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## C H A P. VIII.

IN ANSWER TO THE ARGUMENT FOUNDED ON  
THE MIRACLES WHICH ARE SAID TO HAVE BEEN  
DONE AMONG THE PAGANS.

**T**HE Pagans, in order to promote and recommend their cause, are apt to introduce the assistance of miracles. To these, however, numerous exceptions may be made. Many of them are rejected by the wisest of the Pagans themselves, as being either insufficiently attested, or obviously counterfeited. — Several, also, of the *reputed* facts were done either “in a corner,” or by night, or in the presence only of one or two witnesses, whose senses and credulity might easily be imposed upon by crafty and designing priests. Others again are such, that all the admiration excited by them was solely the result of ignorance in the spectators, respecting the natural effect of things, especially in regard to occult properties; display the powers of the magnet to a people ignorant of those powers, and the same degree of admiration may at any time be raised: and of this nature were the tricks and impostures, in which Simon and Apollonius Tyanæus are repeatedly said to have displayed such singular dexterity. Some effects, I confess, of a more extraordinary kind, which could not have been produced from natural causes by the sole power of human ingenuity, may possibly have been observed among them; still however they were such, that the operation of an absolute and truly  
divine

divine power, the hand of *Omnipotence itself*, I say, may not have been requisite for their production: they may have been performed by spirits of an intermediate nature between God and man; the activity, the power and the subtilty of these spirits may easily have enabled them to astonish and confound the dull faculties of mortals, by a sudden transposition of far-distant objects, and by reconciling the effects of opposite or discordant qualities. Nevertheless, we have already seen that these spirits are not *good* spirits: and that this religion, consequently, is not a *good* religion: in confirmation of which, it may further be observed, that the Pagans declare themselves subject to the power of charms and incantations, whereby they are compelled to act against their inclination; although, at the same time, the wisest (even of the Pagans) were convinced, that words cannot really contain a compulsive, but only a persuasive power; which power is proportioned to the meaning conveyed by them. As a further proof of their being *evil* spirits, we find them undertaking to mislead and bias the affections of men, in contradiction to their earnest endeavours; thereby becoming the ministers of wrong, either by delusive promises, or by effective injuries: whilst even the prohibitory laws of all civil society consider such practices in the light of witchcraft: We cannot, in the mean while, be surprized at the passive conduct of the Supreme Being, in regard to the miraculous power of these dæmons, since they, who had previously revolted from the service of the true God, were little worthy of protection from "the lying wonders and deceitful workings of the devil" At the same time it is a proof of the real impotence of evil spirits, that no essential benefits were ever effected by their means. If any were visibly restored to life by them, that life was only of a very short duration, and of a

very imperfect nature.—But now, to consider this subject in another point of view, I will admit that miracles, really proceeding from the true fountain of all power, have occasionally been wrought among the Pagans. Still, however, it never was *predicted* that those miracles should happen as a mean of *establishing and approving their religion*; and therefore we may fairly argue, that God perhaps effected them for other purposes, and with very different designs. To illustrate the probability of this supposition by example; the miraculous restoration of sight to a blind man, recorded of Vespasian, (if it really were done) was done with a design to facilitate his advancement to the throne, by raising the admiration and respect of the people in his favour; he being a chosen minister of God's wrath, denounced against the Jewish nation. And thus, in other instances, the miracles that have been performed, may possibly have arisen from causes of a like nature, without any interference or connexion with matters of religion.

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## CHAP. IX.

### AS ALSO TO THAT WHICH IS FOUNDED ON THEIR ORACLES.

THE same observations are also for the most part applicable, in answer to the argument which oracles are thought to furnish on the side of Paganism; but especially our late remark, respecting the propriety and justice of the punishment to which those men are abandoned, who disdain to accept those means of information which natural reason and tradition the most ancient afford to every individual,

dividual. Oracular sentences, moreover, are in general ambiguous, and easily capable of an interpretation correspondent with the event, whatever that event may afterwards prove: and if, in any instances, a more express prediction hath been given, it is, nevertheless, by no means conclusive of its being the result of an omniscient mind; the event perhaps being either ascertainable from natural pre-existent causes (as future diseases have been sometimes foretold by experienced physicians) or else obvious at least to probable conjecture, from the issue generally arising out of similar circumstances; the latter mode of prophecy, we find, has frequently been practised with success by skilful and profound statesmen. Admitting, however, that God did, at times, think fit to render even the productions of a Pagan writer prophetic of particular events, the completion of which could solely be dependent on *his* will, it tended not in any instance to the confirmation, but rather to the subversion, of the Pagan system.—Such are the prophecies contained in Virgil; when, in his fourth eclogue, taken from the verses of the Sibyl, he unknowingly delineates the event and the benefits of the coming of our blessed Saviour.

So again, in the same prophetic verses it was written, that he who, of a truth, should be our king, as such should be acknowledged; and that a prince should arise out of the east, who should have dominion over all things. We find, in Porphyrius, a declaration of the oracle of Apollo, that other gods indeed are spirits of an ætherial nature, but that the One Sole God of the Hebrews is the proper object of all worship. Now if the worshippers of Apollo conform to this declaration, they can be no longer *his* worshippers; and if they do not conform to it, they, in fact, pronounce their own deity a liar. Moreover, if the good and happiness of the human race



face had been the end proposed by those spirits in their oracular communications with mankind, they would have endeavoured, above all things, to establish universally in the world, the rules of morality and religion; and would have given to all those who should regulate their lives thereby, the strongest assurances of an ample recompense. No proposition of this nature did they ever make; no recompense of virtue did they ever promise. Numberless, on the other hand, are the instances which prove incontestably that the oracles have often been employed in praising the most abandoned tyrants; in decreeing divine honours to wrestlers and to prize-fighters: in tempting and seducing men to the indulgence of illicit passions, to the gratification of their avarice, by every rapacious and dishonest act, and even to the commission of the crime of murder.

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## CHAP. X.

PAGANISM FELL AWAY, OF ITSELF, WHEN HUMAN SUPPORT WAS WITHHOLDEN FROM IT; AND THEREFORE CANNOT BE THE TRUE RELIGION.

AND now, exclusively of what has been already offered, we are furnished by the Pagan religion with a very considerable argument against itself, in the sudden dissolution which it has constantly and universally undergone, wheresoever the assistance of human power (as if it thereby lost the sole prop of its existence) has ceased to support it. If we cast our eyes around throughout the various kingdoms in which the Christian or the Mahometan religions are established, where can we discover, except indeed in books,



books, the smallest vestiges of Paganism? Nay, history itself informs us, that even in those very times, when the despotism and cruel persecutions of a Nero or a Domitian, or when, afterwards, the subtilty and great abilities of a Julian, were the instruments employed to uphold the Pagan cause, even then, I say, it was found, notwithstanding, to decline daily; not through any violence exerted by its opposer; not through any means of hereditary greatness or of distinguished birth, for Christ was generally considered as the son of a \* mechanic; not through any literary eminence, or the flowery embellishments of language; for the primitive teachers of Christianity were utterly devoid of these advantages; not through any lavish distribution of bribes and presents; for they had none to offer; not through any flattering inducements proposed by them; for they plainly declared on the contrary, that the cause of Christianity would require its adherents to forego with cheerfulness every comfort and convenience, and to suffer with resignation every possible calamity.— Judge then the feeble constitution of Paganism, when the efforts of an enemy so totally unarmed could bring it to the ground!—The Christian dispensation however, it should here further be observed, not only dispelled the clouds of Pagan ignorance and credulity, but at the name of Christ, even the spirits of uncleanness came forth, were rebuked, and put to silence; and when the cause of that silence was required of them, they found themselves compelled to own that all their powers failed, at the invocation of that sacred name.

\* See Mark chap. vi. ver. 3. and Luke chap. iv. ver. 22.

## C H A P. XL

A REFUTATION OF THAT ABSURD OPINION, WHICH  
 ASCRIBES THE RISE AND FALL OF A RELIGION  
 TO THE INFLUENCE OF THE HEAVENLY BODIES.

CERTAIN Philosophers have declared, that the  
 origin and decline of all religions are occasioned  
 by the heavenly bodies. Astrology, however, not-  
 withstanding their pretensions to a perfect knowledge  
 of it, is in itself a science which is treated and set  
 forth under systems so various and contradictory,  
 that the uncertainty of the truth is the only article  
 of certain information. But here I speak not with  
 regard to those effects which result from natural and  
 necessary causes, but to those only which depend  
 upon the human will. Now the will I consider as a  
 principle of such absolute and innate freedom, as to  
 be utterly incapable of any outward restraint or  
 violence whatsoever. If the act of the will were  
 made necessarily subservient to any outward im-  
 pression of a forcible nature, the faculty of deliberate  
 reasoning and the power of decisive election would  
 at once become useless endowments; all legal justice  
 also, and the equity of rewards and punishment  
 would be instantly annihilated; for how can any act  
 of unavoidable necessity, be either culpable or meri-  
 torious? But, further, it is evident that certain acts  
 of the will are of an *evil* nature: if then these  
 actions originate from any irresistible planetary in-  
 fluence, inasmuch as we believe that God himself is  
 the giver of that influence to the heavens and to  
 the constellations thereof, we consequently declare  
 that a God of infinite perfection and goodness, is the  
 true cause of moral evil: and since he hath positive

and expressly asserted his utter detestation of evil, at the same time endowing it with efficient and irresistible power in the original constitution of nature, we charge him with having a contrariety of wills, approving and condemning the same action, and rendering that effect sinful, which was prompted and produced by divine impulse. It is argued by others, with a greater shew of probability, that the atmosphere is first affected by the heavenly bodies, and that afterwards, our bodies are affected by the atmosphere; and thence they imbibe certain qualities, which may then become greatly instrumental in raising correspondent affections in the mind; these affections, say they, continually solicit the compliance, and frequently bias the direction, of the will. This argument, however, admitted in its full extent, is foreign to the present question. It is the great business of Christianity to divert the human mind as much as possible from the sensual objects which delight the body; and therefore this system of religion cannot possibly originate from any bodily affections, and consequently cannot be produced by any planetary influence; as, according to our first position, it is by those affections *only*, that the heavenly bodies act upon the mind. The sagest astrologers, we observe, exempt all such as are really wise and virtuous from the influence of the heavenly bodies: now (allowing the authority of these sage astrologers much greater weight than the present more enlightened times can seriously admit) the first converts to Christianity are proved to come under this exemption in an eminent degree, by the whole tenor of their lives; and if, further, we admit that literary eminence and deep erudition can be instrumental towards the prevention of these contagious affections of the body, the advocates of Christianity have, some of them, in all ages been intitled upon

this ground also, to considerable distinction and applause. Add to this, it has always been admitted by the ablest opinions, that the influence of the heavenly bodies is only local in its effect, and temporary in its duration; but the Christian religion endureth at this day, through a period of almost 1800 years; and that, not locally, or in one place only, but in regions the most distant from each other, and in climates of the most opposite nature.

## CHAP. XII.

THE MEN OF EMINENCE AND LEARNING IN THE PAGAN WORLD VERY PLAINLY APPROVED THE MAIN POINTS OF CHRISTIANITY; AND IF THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM CONTAIN ANY THING NOT EASILY CREDIBLE, THE PAGAN IS ATTENDED WITH EQUAL DIFFICULTIES.

OUR Pagan opponents are in a great measure disarmed of all offensive power, in their attacks upon Christianity, because such is the integrity and so great is the excellence of every individual part of that system, that by its own intrinsic lustre; as it were, it flashes immediate conviction on their minds; insomuch that the instances are numerous, wherein heathens are observed to have inculcated, severally, the very same principles and duties, which are collectively enjoined by our religion: they teach us, for example, that religion consisteth not in ritual observances, but in a pious disposition of the heart: that the intentional adulterer is guilty of the actual sin of adultery; that we ought not to requite an injury; that a man should be the husband of one wife;



wise; that the marriage-covenant should be inviolable; that all men should do good to all, but especially to the poor and needy; that we should abstain as much as possible from oaths; that in our food and our apparel we should limit our desires by the wants of our nature. But further; suppose that we admit, that matters, not easily reconcileable to our belief, are contained in the doctrine of Christianity: the same objection may be made with equal justice against the doctrines and opinions of the wisest Pagans; and this we have already exemplified (See book i. chap. 22. and book ii. chap. 7.) in respect to the immortality of the soul, and the possible resurrection of the body. Thus Plato, according to the Chaldaean system, distinguishes the Divine Nature into three heads: 1st. The Father; 2dly, The paternal mind, which he elsewhere denominates an *emanation* from the Deity, whereby the universe was made; and 3dly, The soul, whereby all things are preserved, established, regulated. Julian, that inveterate enemy of the Christians, believed the possibility of an union between the Divine Nature and the human; and cited *Æsculapius* as an instance of the fact, representing him as one come down from heaven to teach the art of medicine to mankind.

The cross of Christ becomes a "stumbling stone and a rock of offence," unto many; but to reconcile their minds to this circumstance, I would only wish them to observe the strange accounts that are given us, in the mean time, in regard to the *Pagan* deities. Of these some were the slaves of kings; others smitten by a thunderbolt; others cut in pieces; others wounded and disabled. It must further be remarked, that the most learned of the Pagans themselves declare, all of them, that virtue, in proportion to the trials and sufferings which it endureth *for the sake of virtue*, hath the greater cause of triumph and rejoicing.



rejoicing. I cannot better conclude my observations on this subject, than by repeating the declaration, which Plato, with a kind of prophetic inspiration, as it were, hath delivered in his second book *De Republica*; wherein he saith, "that in order to approve the reality and perfection of a man's integrity, it behoveth him totally to divest his virtue of all outward attractions and apparent merit whatsoever; so as to become accounted wicked in the eyes of others; to be treated by them as an object of derision and abuse; and to be brought, ultimately, to an ignominious death." And doubtless, upon these terms alone, was it possible to exhibit to the world a pattern of consummate patience!

## BOOK THE FIFTH.

## CHAPTER I.

## A REFUTATION OF JUDAISM; WITH A PREFATORY ADDRESS TO THE JEWS.

**T**HE light of Judaism, like the glimmering and doubtful ray which gradually opens on our first advances from a cave of darkness, now dawns upon our sight, as we struggle into day from the black and horrid night of Paganism. The Jewish dispensation, however, as it still remains a part, so was it, originally, the beginning, of the truth. I could wish, therefore, to bespeak the candid attention of the Jews, that neither animosity or prejudice may influence their judgment. They are the descendants it is well known, of a holy and devout generation, a generation, visited at sundry times by the Divine Favour, as well by the prophets as by the angels of God. From that nation arose the Messiah himself, and the primitive teachers of Christianity: to them belongs the tree whereon we are ingrafted: to them was entrusted the keeping of the oracles of God, which equally with them, we value and revere; sending forth with Saint Paul, our sighs and our prayers unto God for them, that speedily the day may come, when "the veil being taken away" from before their eyes, they shall clearly behold with us the "fulfilling of the law;" and when we, according to the prophecies of old, "the inhabitants of another city," shall "take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew,"

Jew," saying, let us go up with one accord, and let us worship together that true and only God, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob.

## CHAP. II.

IT IS EVIDENTLY INCUMBENT ON THE JEWS TO ADMIT THAT THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST ARE SUFFICIENTLY ATTESTED.

**I**N the first place, then, we would request the Jews, that they will not esteem any circumstance unfair in the instance of another, which they would esteem reasonable in their own. If a Pagan should enquire of them the grounds of their belief in the miracles of Moses; what answer can they make but this? that such and so invariable the accounts thereof have been, that the testimony of actual eye-witnesses can alone have given rise to them. So again, the miraculous increase of the widow's oil, by Elisha; the sudden cleansing of the leprous Syrian; the restoration of the dead son of the Shunamite to life, and other similar events; are, all of them, implicitly believed by the Jews, solely because they are transmitted to posterity by credible and proper witnesses. They readily admit the ascension of Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven, upon the *single* evidence of Elisha; as they deemed it the evidence of a man altogether unexceptionable. *We*, however, produce *twelve* witnesses, of irreproachable lives and characters, in proof of the ascension of our blessed Saviour; and indeed a far greater number in respect to his appearance upon earth after death. Now if these things be true, the doctrine of Christ must necessarily be true, also; and nothing, we perceive,

can

can be adduced on the side of Judaism, which may not be applied, with equal or with stronger force, on the side of Christianity. Independently, however, of the weight of testimony, the very Thalmudists and the Jews themselves confess that miracles were wrought by Christ; and this very circumstance ought, doubtless, to suffice: as it is not possible for God to mark his approbation of any system promulgated by man, by a method more effectual than that of the performance of miracles.

### CH A P. III.

#### A REFUTATION OF THOSE WHO ATTRIBUTE THESE MIRACLES TO THE ASSISTANCE OF INFERNAL AGENTS.

**T**HE miracles of Christ have been attributed by some, to the co-operation and influence of evil spirits: but this infamous assertion, hath already been refuted (book ii. chap. 5) by observing that wheresoever the light of Christianity appeared, the whole power of evil spirits was broken and destroyed. Then as to the assertion of some others, accusing Jesus of having studied witchcraft and the magic arts in Egypt, this surely carries with it a much fainter air of probability than that similar accusation of the Pagans against Moses, which we meet with in Pliny and Apuleius. Now it does not appear that Jesus ever was in Egypt, except from the writings of his disciples; and these, at the same time, particularly mention his return from that country, while he was yet an infant: whereas, that Moses did actually pass a considerable period of his riper age in Egypt, is told us by himself and others as a certain fact. The Mosaic, however, and the



Christian dispensations very strongly exculpate their respective authors from the crime in question, as both the one and the other expressly prohibit all such arts and practices, as being "an abomination to the Lord." But further; if we should admit that, in the time of Christ and his disciples, such magic powers did actually exist, in Egypt or elsewhere, sufficient to effect those miracles which are recorded of Christ; sufficient I say to make the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, and the blind to see; still, however, the Emperors Tiberius, Nero, and many others, who spared neither pains or expence in inquiries of this nature, must inevitably have detected the source of those miracles: besides, if the Jewish accounts be true, that the members of their great Sanhedrim were conversant in the magic arts, to the certain discovery and conviction of offenders; if likewise we consider the inveterate hatred of those very members against Jesus, and the jealous eye with which they watched that increasing honour and authority which his miracles in particular procured to him, they themselves doubtless, would either have employed the same art to work similar miracles, or at least they would have taken care to render it unquestionably evident to the world that all *his* pretended miracles resulted not, in fact, from any other cause.

#### CHAPTER IV.

#### OF THE POWER OF MYSTERIOUS WORDS.

**T**HERE is an assertion, as impudent as false, which nevertheless prevails among certain of the Jews, ascribing all the miracles of Jesus to the mere operation of some mystical name, which (as they



they tell the story) was deposited by Solomon in the temple, and was there guarded by two lions, for more than 1000 years; till at length Jesus found means to convey it secretly away: now with respect to this very singular and surprising circumstance of the two lions, not a single syllable about the matter do we find, either in the books of Kings or of Chronicles; Josephus also makes no mention of it; neither was any thing of the kind discovered by the Romans, who entered the temple, under Pompey, sixty-three years \* before the birth of Christ.

## CHAP. V.

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS WERE EVIDENTLY THE RESULT OF A DIVINE POWER, BECAUSE HIS DOCTRINE ENFORCED THE WORSHIP OF ONE GOD, THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE.

THE Jews themselves confess, that miracles were wrought by Christ; and this single proposition being once admitted, I maintain that all men are consequently bounden, by the very law of Moses, to believe in Christ. It hath been declared by God, in the 18th chapter of Deuteronomy, that he would

\* At that period, the rapid and extensive progress of Pompey's arms in Asia was interrupted by Aristobulus, who had usurped the priesthood from his elder brother Hyrcanus, and who had refused to obey the summons which Pompey had sent for his appearance. Aristobulus converted the temple into a garison, but after a siege of three months, it was taken, and 12000 of its defenders slain.—Pompey entered this great sanctuary (says Goldsmith) with a mixture of resolution and fear, and though he went with an eager curiosity into the Holy of Holies, yet he shewed so much veneration for the place, that he forbore to touch any of the vast treasures deposited there.

raise up other prophets also, after Moses; and unto them "shall my people hearken," saith the Lord: at the same time denouncing very heavy punishments, in case of disobedience to this injunction. Now the surest indications of a prophet, the most excellent proofs of a divine mission, that can possibly be imagined, are *miracles*. It hath also been declared, in the 13th chapter of the same book, that if any one should appear amongst us as a prophet, and should give "signs and wonders" unto us, nevertheless we should not hearken unto him, if ever he entice the people, saying, "let us go after other gods, and let us serve *them*;" for God permitteth those signs and wonders to be given, merely that he may prove the sincerity and firmness of his people in the worship of the true God. From a due collation of these passages, the Hebrew expositors very properly infer, that it is our duty to believe in every one who worketh miracles, *unless* indeed he seek to mislead us from the worship of the true God: because in that case only, we are cautioned not to trust in miracles, however specious and authentic they may seem. Jesus, however, so far from being in any instance a seducer of the people to the worship of false gods, expressly prohibited on the contrary, every practice of that nature, as being the greatest of all possible sins against God; and strictly enjoined us also to reverence the writings of Moses, and of the prophets who came after him: no just objection therefore can possibly be raised against *his* miracles; for, though some may think proper to allege the partial disagreements which occur between the law of Christ and that of Moses, we shall prove that ground of argument to be futile and insufficient.

## CHAP. VI.

AN ANSWER TO THAT OBJECTION WHICH IS  
FOUNDED UPON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN  
THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE LAW OF JESUS:  
POINTING OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER  
SUBSEQUENT INSTITUTION, MORE EXCELLENT  
THAN THAT OF MOSES.

IT is a rule, laid down by the Jewish Rabbins  
themselves, that every precept whatsoever, except  
that which regards the worship of one god, may be  
broken without fear of punishment, when a prophet  
(by which is understood a worker of miracles) shall  
authorize the violation. The power of legislation  
which God independently possessed, and which by  
the hand of Moses he exerted, did not afterwards  
depart from him; and, doubtless, every independent  
legislator, whatever laws he may enact, is still at  
liberty, at any future period, to repeal and to re-  
voke those laws. In objection against this, it is no  
argument to say that the Divine Being is immutable;  
for the question here does not concern the intrinsic  
nature, but the works of God. The element of  
light, the periods of youth and age, the seasons of  
the year, are the works of God; yet all these are  
subject to perpetual changes. The Almighty per-  
mitted Adam, heretofore, to eat of all the other  
fruits of Paradise, but charged him to abstain from  
the fruit of one particular tree. Does man presume  
to ask the reason? In the will of the Almighty he  
shall find his answer. The general commandment  
of God is, "Thou shalt do no murder:" neverthe-  
less the Lord commanded Abraham to slay his son.

Of the sacrifices also, which were offered unto him apart from the tabernacle, it pleased him to accept some, and to reject others. Independently, however, of these and other instances, in which the will of God has occasionally deviated from the general tenor of that will, although we may allow the law of Moses to be good, we do not thereby exclude the possibility of greater excellence in some future institution. The fond parent frequently descends to the imperfect language of his infant-children: overlooks the little faults of their early years; and bribes them, with cakes and sweetmeats, to listen to instruction: but then, as they gradually attain a riper age, he carefully corrects that language, instructs them how to speak with propriety, instils into their minds every precept and principle of goodness, and places in their view, the beauty and the rewards of virtue.—But now, in order to demonstrate that the precepts of the first covenant “are not faultless,” it will be sufficient only to observe, that many pious men of those times did actually exhibit in the tenor of *their own* lives, a more perfect rule of conduct, a more excellent system of moral and religious duties. Moses, for example, while his people were permitted to take personal, as well as judicial, vengeance for any injury received, still made himself, in his own instance, an earnest intercessor for his enemies, under all their most cruel abuses and most injurious persecutions. So again, we see the ready disposition of David to save and to pardon his rebellious son; we see also his exemplary patience and forbearance, when insulted by the curses of Shimei. Not a single instance do we find, of any good man availing himself of the custom of divorce, although the laws would have warranted the practice. Laws, in short, must be adapted to the temper of the people at large; and consequently the condition in which the Jews—  
then



then were, made it requisite that some things should remain unnoticed for the present; the entire reformation of which was to be the work of a more perfect institution, at that future period, when God should be graciously pleased, by a more powerful operation of his spirit, to collect unto himself a new people out of all the nations of the earth. I cannot help observing further, that even those rewards which are openly proposed by the Mosaic dispensation, are only of a limited and temporal nature; all men, therefore, must admit the possibility of some better future institution, holding forth, as the law of Christ hath now done, the better promises of eternal and immortal rewards; and these, not shewn to us "as through a glass darkly," but by open and express revelation.

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## C H A P. VII.

JESUS, WHILE ON EARTH, CONFORMED STRICTLY WITH THE LAW OF MOSES; AND ONLY THE MERE CEREMONIES ENJOINED BY IT, WHICH OF COURSE HAD NO INTRINSIC MORAL GOODNESS IN THEM, WERE AFTERWARDS ABOLISHED.

IN order to evince the injustice and infamy of those Jews who were contemporary with our Saviour, it ought here, by the way, to be observed, that all that cruelty of treatment, that severity of punishment which they made him undergo, was wholly unprovoked on his part by any single offence against their laws. He was circumcised as they were; he observed the same restrictions with regard to food, and the same customs with regard to dress, which

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the



the Jews themselves did; he sent the lepers whom he cleansed to the priests; and kept, with religious observance, their passovers and other solemn feasts. If indeed he healed any on the sabbath day, he justified the action not only on the ground of law, but on that of general and received opinion; and it was not till after his ascension into heaven, that he first began to publish to the world the abrogation of particular Jewish ordinances; at that blessed period, having triumphed over death, he gave to his apostles that eminent and distinguished miracle, the gift of the Holy Ghost, thereby proving that he had obtained the absolute dominion over all things, and consequently possessed an independent right of legislation; according to the prophecy\* of Daniel which declared, that, soon after the destruction of the kingdoms of Syria, and of Egypt, (the latter of which happened in the days of Augustus) unto a man lowly in appearance, and of no reputation, should "be given dominion and glory and a kingdom; that all people, nations and languages should serve him; that his dominion should be an everlasting dominion, and that his kingdom should not be destroyed. It is further observable, that all that part of the Jewish law which the coming of our Saviour made useless and unnecessary, was of no real or intrinsic worth; consisting merely of ceremonial matters, in different in themselves, and consequently having no claim to an immutable observance. If indeed any moral or religious principle had originally rendered that observance necessary, God would undoubtedly have pronounced it to be an universal, not a partial obligation; and instead of suffering a period of more than 2000 years to elapse previously to the institution, would certainly have

\* See Dan. chap. iii. and viii. and compare chap. viii. with chap. xi.

ordained it from the first foundation of the world. To Abel, to Enoch, to Noah, to Melchisedec, to Job, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, who were, all of them, pious men and distinguished objects of the divine favour, this portion of the Jewish law was, for the most part, if not entirely, unknown; and yet they received not, on that account, the less encouragement to their reliance upon God, or the less manifestation of his love towards them. We do not find that Moses at any time exhorted his father-in-law Jethro to adopt these ritual observances, or that Jonas recommended them to the Ninevites; neither do any of the other prophets, when they write to the Chaldeans, the Egyptians, the Sidonians, the Tyrians, the Idumæans, the Moabites, ever reprove them for neglecting to adopt these ordinances, although they enumerate with great accuracy the several particulars of their offences, and misconduct. These institutions then, were peculiarly appropriated to the Jews: established, it may be, with a view to counteract some national propensity, and to divert them from some favourite vice; or perhaps intended either as a trial of their obedience, or as a typical indication of future events. The abolition of them, therefore, is an act of power not at all more wonderful or extraordinary than the act of any regal authority whatsoever, abolishing particular municipal institutions, in order to establish one *uniform* code of laws throughout a whole kingdom. We have no sufficient reason to believe, that God ever pledged himself to the Jews, that he would, on no account, make any future alteration in these ordinances; for as to their being called *perpetual*, we find the same expression continually in use, to signify merely that the edicts so described, are not dependent upon annual institution, or adapted only to particular occasions, as in the instances of war, of peace, or scarcity; and yet this expression, all the

while, by no means prevents the legislature from changing or reversing those edicts, when the service of the state shall render such a step expedient. The divine institutions, in like manner, which were appointed for the Jews, were, some of them, of a temporary nature, intended only for the time of their continuance in the wilderness; others, again, local, confined to their possession of the land of Canaan. These therefore, for the sake of distinction, God indefinitely calls *perpetual*; thereby intending an injunction upon all the Jewish nation for their constant and unremitted observance of them, unless they should receive some future indication of his pleasure to the contrary. Universally familiar as this manner of expression is, the Jewish nation of all others ought never to be surprized at it, as they must be conscious that their own laws adopt the very same language, expressly calling that right and that servitude perpetual, which they mean only to continue from one year of Jubilee \* to another. Nay the Jews themselves call the coming of the Messiah the fulfilling of the year of jubilee, or, in other words, the *great jubilee*. Now this they undoubtedly derive from their prophets, who declare the promise of a new future covenant. "Behold the days come," saith the Lord, according to the prophet Jeremiah, "that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel; I will write my law in their hearts; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." The gracious declaration here made may fairly suggest to us,

\* The year of jubilee, or of releasing, happened after every 49 years.

in striking colours, the picture of a king, who in consequence of the violent animosities and quarrels of his subjects, should resolve to abolish all distinction and variety of laws among them, and in order to effect a permanent and lasting peace, should establish one perfect and universal code of laws for their general observance; at the same time encouraging their future amendment by the promise of an act of oblivion and indemnity for all past offences. Enough hath now been said, to prove the point in question; nevertheless we shall proceed to shew, by examining severally the abrogated parts of the Mo-  
saic law, that they are, all of them, of such a nature, that they could not possibly possess any intrinsic recommendation in the sight of God; neither ought they, in point of expediency, to have been irreversible.

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## C H A P. VIII.

SUCH WERE THE JEWISH SACRIFICES; WHICH  
NEVER, IN THEMSELVES, WERE PLEASING  
TO GOD.

**T**HE principal and most obvious article of the abrogated law, is that of sacrifice: many of the Jews are of opinion, that sacrifices were originally devised by human invention, before they became of divine institution. The Jews, doubtless, were a people remarkably eager after rites and ceremonies: God, therefore, with sufficient reason, appointed a great number of them, to gratify this prevalent inclination, were it only to prevent their relapsing



into the worship of false gods, from a remembrance of their practices at the time of their abode in Egypt. Afterwards, however, when their descendants began to look upon these ceremonies in too high a light, conceiving them to be really and intrinsically pleasing to the Divine Being, and a necessary ingredient in true piety, we find them censured by the prophets on this account : " I will not reprove thee, saith the Lord, because of thy sacrifices and burnt-offerings ; that they shall be \* continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thine house ; nor he-goat out of thy folds. For all the beasts of the forest are mine ; and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls upon the mountains ; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for the whole world is mine, and all that is therein. Thinkest thou that I will eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats ? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows to the Most High." Psalm L.

Some among the Jews pretend to understand this, in reference to the irreligion and impiety of those who offered up the sacrifices, and not as relating to the offerings themselves : but the cited passages convey clearly another meaning, expressive of the utter incapacity of the act itself to afford any pleasure to the Supreme Being. Besides, if we consider the whole tenor of the psalm, we shall find that God addresses that part of it to his *devout* worshippers ; he had previously said, " Gather my *saints* together unto me : " and afterwards he adds ; " hear, O my *people*." Herein he speaks as their instructor. In the verses subsequent to those above cited, he changes his discourse ; as usual, to those of an opposite

\* See Clarke's Family Bible on this passage.

description :

description : " but unto the ungodly saith the Lord ;" see verse 16 and seq. The same sense is evident in other passages. See Psalm li. ver. 16, 17. See also in Psalm xl. ver. 8, 9, and seq — " Hear the words of the Lord," saith Isaiah also, in chap. i. ver. 10, 11, and 12. " Give ear unto the law of our God. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts ; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of rams, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands to tread my courts ?"—Then again, in Jeremiah, this passage is at once repeated and explained. " Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel : Put your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices : but this thing I commanded them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people : and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you." See chap. vii. ver. 21, and seq.—In Hosea also it is written, " For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice ; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." See chap. vi. ver. 6.—So again, in Micah, when the question is proposed, " Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God ? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? or shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old ?" The answer of the Lord is, " He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but

but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." Ch. vi. ver. 6, 7, 8.\*

Since then it is evident, from all the passages above mentioned, that sacrifices are by no means a primary object of God's will, or conducive in themselves, to his real satisfaction; since also superstition and idolatry had gradually crept in among his people, insomuch that they considered those external observances as the principal part of true devotion, and believed that the blood of victims was a full compensation for their sins; can we wonder that God at length should think fit to abolish an institution, indifferent and immaterial, it is true, in *its own nature*, but rendered *vicious* by a perverted application? Can we wonder at this, I say, when Hezekiah likewise brake in pieces the brazen-serpent which Moses had set up, because the people had begun "to burn incense to it," and to treat it with divine honours?—That *predictions* also, are not wanted, importing the abolition of the sacrifices in question, must be plain and obvious to every man, from a little consideration of the law of Moses, wherein the office of the priesthood is granted solely to the posterity of Aaron, and the place of its administration is limited to their native land. In the 110th Psalm, there is likewise a prediction, that a ruler over divers countries should be sent out of Sion; and that the same should be a king and a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.—So again Isaiah tells us, that "In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt; and not only the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that

\* Grotius has *paraphrased*, not *transcribed* the passages quoted in this chapter. But as I must confess myself incompetent to judge of the merits of *his* alterations, and as the usual translation of the Hebrew text is equally favourable to our argument, I have thought myself neither *authorized* nor *required* to follow him.

day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation, but Assyria also, the work of mine hands, and Israel mine inheritance." Chap. xix. ver. 19 and 25.—So too in the 66th chapter of the same prophet, "I will gather all nations and tongues, saith the Lord; and as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord, so shall all flesh come and worship before me. I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord." Verses 18, 20, 21, 23.—Now all these predictions could never come to pass, whilst the law of Moses remained in full force. To these may be added the prophetic declaration of God's wrath against Israel, in the words of Malachi. "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts; neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering." Mal. chap. i. ver. 10, 11. "He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease," saith Daniel, in his relation of the angel's prediction, respecting the Messiah. Chap. ix. ver. 27.

It is not, however, by prophecies like these, it is not by *verbal* declarations alone, that God hath signified his pleasure, that the rites and sacrifices of the Mosaic institution should no longer be continued: the divine disapprobation is sufficiently made known to us, by the evidence of facts themselves, since God hath suffered the Jewish nation to remain, for a period of nearly 1800 years, without a temple; without an altar; without any accurate numbering of their respective tribes and families, so as to ascertain that primary and important question; by whom the office of the priesthood could be *lawfully* administered?



## C H A P. IX.

SUCH, LIKEWISE, WAS THE DISTINCTION OF  
CLEAN AND UNCLEAN MEATS.

LET us now proceed in like manner to canvass the prohibitory law, with respect to certain kinds of meats. Immediately after the universal deluge, God evidently gave \* to Noah and to his posterity, the free and unlimited use of all meats whatsoever. (See Gen. chap. ix. ver. 2, 3.) This permission, consequently, was not confined to Ham and Japhet only but was extended also to Shem, and transmitted to his descendants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But when the Jews, afterwards by living in Egypt had contracted the idolatrous and superstitious notions of that country, God then prohibited, for the first time, the eating of particular animals; whether it might be, because those animals were chiefly reserved by the Egyptians for sacrifice to their deities, and dedicated to the purposes of divination, or because, among the typical expressions and allusions, so generally prevalent throughout the Jewish law, particular descriptions of animals might be designed as emblematical of particular kinds of vice. With regard to

\* The mention of clean and unclean beasts in the history of the flood, seems to contradict this assertion: but that was either said by a prolepsis or anticipation to those to whom the law was known, or else the unclean ought to be taken for such creatures as man naturally abhors to eat, and which Tacitus in lib. vi. Histor. calls profane. Unless indeed you rather consider those as clean, which are fed with grass, and those as unclean, which are fed with the flesh of other animals. Grotius.

the extent of these injunctions, they are evidently not intended to be *universal*: this appears from the instance given in the xivth chapter of Deuteronomy (see ver. 21) wherein we read, "Thou shalt not eat of any thing that dieth of itself, thou shalt give it to the stranger that is within thy gates, that he may eat it." The Jews, at the same time, are commanded to shew every act of kindness and regard to that stranger, as to one recommended by the Divine Favour. The ancient Jewish Rabbins have given an express tradition that the prohibitory law of meats was to cease at the coming of the Messiah; when the flesh of the sow and of the ox should be equally accounted clean. And doubtless, when God was pleased to collect unto himself one people out of all the nations of the earth, it was far more consistent with his equity as well as wisdom, to admit the Jews to the general state of liberty, in matters of this nature, than to subject and reduce all men to their particular restrictions.

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## CHAP. X.

### THE DISTINCTION OF DAYS.

**WE** come now to consider the Jewish festivals. These, all of them, were in general appointed as memorials of God's kindness to that nation, in their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and in their subsequent conveyance to the promised land. Now, a future period is foretold by Jeremiah in his 16th and 23d chapters, when the remembrance of that kindness shall be rendered so inconsiderable by new and far greater kindnesses, that the bare mention

tion of it shall almost be forgotten. And here we may repeat what has already been observed on the subject of their sacrifices; that the people had begun to entertain a similar confidence in this particular; as if the commission of all other offences whatsoever were a matter of very little consequence, provided that they paid a regular and strict attention to these formal institutions. Hence it is that God thus expresseth himself, in the first chapter of Isaiah, "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." See ver. 14. With regard to the Sabbath in particular, it is usually objected, that the observance of that day is an universal and a perpetual commandment; not given and confined to one people only, but declared from the beginning to the first parent of mankind. To this I answer, agreeably to the opinions of the most learned of the Jews, that the precept respecting Sabbaths is two fold; a precept of commemoration, as in Exod. chap. xx. ver. 18.; and a precept of observance, as in Exod. chap. xxxi. ver. 31.—Now the precept of commemoration enjoins nothing more than a religious remembrance of the creation of the world: the precept of observance consists in a strict abstinence from every employment, except that of worship. The former was given from the beginning, and, no doubt, carefully obeyed by those devout persons who lived *before* the law, such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: among the latter of whom, while we frequently read of their travelling to distant places, we no where find their journies interrupted by the Sabbath; a circumstance which, after the Exodus, is constantly observable: for \* the first day

\* "Upon the morning watch of that very day which the Jews kept for their Sabbath, God overwhelmed Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea; and saved Israel *that day* out of the hands of the Egyptians." See Nelson's Festivals, chap. i,

of security experienced by the Israelites after their deliverance out of Egypt, and their happy preservation and passage through the Red Sea, was the regular Jewish Sabbath : and thereon they sang a song of triumphant rejoicing to the Lord ; who thenceforth enjoined them to observe that day as a day of perfect rest ; which we find first mentioned in the gathering of manna ; see *Exod. chap. xvi.* as also in *chap. xxxv. ver. 2* ; and in *Levit. chap. xxiii. ver. 3*. To this purport also the deliverance out of Egypt is given as the cause of the law respecting Sabbaths ; see *Deut. chap. v. ver. 15*. A provision likewise is hereby made, as may be seen in the places above cited, against the cruel severity of masters towards their servants, in allowing them no respite from labour. The obligation, it is true, extended even to all inhabitants and sojourners in the land ; but this was evidently in order to preserve one uniform appearance of rest throughout the whole nation : it is, at the same time, sufficiently clear that other nations were not included in this law, were it only from the frequent mention of it which occurs in scripture (as in *Exod. chap. xxxi. ver. 13. 16.*) under the appellation of " a sign " and even of a special and " perpetual covenant " between God and Israel. We have shewn, moreover, in the beginning of this chapter, from the promise (which is there alluded to) of far greater kindnesses to come, that the festivals appointed by the Israelites as memorials of their deliverance out of Egypt, were by no means such as would require an everlasting observance : besides, had the sabbatical law of rest been enacted from the beginning, and so enacted that it never could on any occasions have been broken or repealed, it must necessarily have prevailed in the conflict, whenever it should clash with other institutions : this, however, was far from being the case, for infants, it



is certain, might legally receive circumcision on the Sabbath day; (see John, chap. vii. ver. 22.) and while the temple remained, victims were slaughtered as much upon that day as upon any other. See Numbers, chap. xxviii. ver. 9.

That this law was not immutable, is plain from the Jewish doctors themselves, when they admit, that any work whatsoever might be carried on upon the Sabbath without the smallest impropriety, under the sanction and authority of a prophet; and this they exemplify by the taking of Jericho on the Sabbath-day, at the command of Joshua. Some also of the same Rabbins afford us, rather happily, a very strong demonstration that the coming of the Messiah would destroy all distinction of days, from that passage of Isaiah, which declares (see chap. lxvi. ver. 24.) "that it shall come to pass, that all flesh shall come to worship before the Lord, from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another."

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## CHAP. XI.

### AND THE OUTWARD SIGN OF CIRCUMCISION.

**C**IRCUMCISION, the next article proposed to our consideration, is an institution of higher antiquity, it is true, than Moses; as the observance of it was enjoined to Abraham and to his posterity. Nevertheless, this self-same precept was the basis of the covenant delivered by Moses. The Lord said unto Abraham, as we read in Genesis, "I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, even all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou and thy seed after thee, in their

their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised." See chap. xvii. It is already shewn, however, in the viiith chapter of this book, that a new covenant should afterwards supersede the old one; a covenant of universal extent and general obligation: and consequently this mark of distinction, this seal of singularity must thenceforth become unnecessary. In the precept of outward circumcision, it is further evident that a certain mystical and superior meaning is contained; this the prophets clearly indicate, when they enjoin the circumcision of the heart; (see Deut. chap. x. and xxx. as also in the ivth of Jeremiah) and to this spiritual signification tend all the precepts of our Saviour. In like manner we ought therefore to consider in a figurative sense, the promises annexed to the law of circumcision, as expressive of *some higher purposes*: we must regard, for instance, the promise of an earthly inheritance in Canaan, as typical of a truly eternal inheritance in heaven; which never can be more clearly revealed, than it was by Jesus Christ: so again, with respect to Abraham being made "a father of many nations," we must consider it in reference to that future period wherein it was to come to pass, that nations, not limited in number or extent, but innumerable and universal, should follow the example of Abraham, in his eminent degree of faith in God: an event which is alone verified and effected by the gospel-dispensation!—What wonder can there be then, that the shadow should be *now* made void, by the coming of the substance?

The sign of circumcision, we are well assured, can boast no intrinsic or peculiar right to a portion of God's gracious favour, since we see that not only persons *before* Abraham, but that Abraham himself

also, 'yet being uncircumcised,' became acceptable unto God; and though the ceremony was discontinued by the Israelites during the whole time of their remaining in the wilderness, God never expostulated with them on account of that omission.

## CHAP. XII.

AND EVEN IN THESE VERY CEREMONIES, GREAT LENITY AND TOLERATION WERE SHEWN TOWARDS THE JEWS, BY THE APOSTLES OF OUR SAVIOUR.

OBLIGATIONS of the highest nature undoubtedly entitled our Saviour and his apostles to every acknowledgment from the Jewish nation; inasmuch as their release from ritual bondage was brought to them by Christ himself, and their liberty assured to them by benefits and miracles, at least *not inferior* to those which they received from Moses. Nevertheless, the primitive teachers of our religion exacted not even this trifling return of gratitude for the happiness thus offered; but readily allowed them, in indifferent matters, a full liberty of living as they pleased, provided that they only would adopt the truly amiable and excellent precepts of Christ Jesus; under this single and very reasonable restriction: that they should not compel *strangers* to an observance of their ritual law, unto whom that ritual law was never given. Toleration and indulgences like these are alone sufficient to demonstrate the injustice of the Jews in making their ceremonial institutions a plea for rejecting the tenets of Christianity — And now, having thus resolved almost the only objection that is in general alleged against the miracles of

of Jesus, let us proceed to such other arguments, as are adapted to the further conviction of our Jewish adversaries.

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## CHAP. XIII.

A REFUTATION OF JUDAISM, FROM THE GENERAL CONFESSION OF A PROMISED MESSIAH, OF INFINITE AND UNEQUALLED EXCELLENCE.

[T is admitted jointly by Jews and Christians, that, exclusively of many distinguished benefactors, of divine appointment, to the Jewish nation, *One* infinitely superior to the rest, is foretold and promised by the prophets; unto whom indeed, in common with others, the title of Messiah is applied, but unto whom *alone* that title is singularly and eminently applicable.—That he came long ago into the world, is the profession of *our* faith; while the Jews, on the other hand, believe him still to come. To determine the dispute between us, we have only to consult the evidence of those books, to which both parties equally allow a sufficient and decisive authority.

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## CHAP. XIV.

THAT THE MESSIAH HATH ALREADY BEEN ON EARTH, IS PROVED FROM THE PREVIOUS INDICATION OF THE TIME OF HIS COMING.

DANIEL, to whose righteousness and singular integrity Ezekiel hath borne witness, neither practised



tified any intentional imposture in our instance, or experienced any from the angel Gabriel in his own. Nevertheless, we have his written declaration, authorised by the word of that angel, that "from the going forth of the commandment of Cyrus to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem," a period of 500 years should not elapse before the coming of the Messiah. See Dan. chap. ix.

Upwards of 2000 years, however, are now expired, and still the expected Messiah of the Jews is not arrived: neither can they name any other person than Christ Jesus, whose coming would agree with the period foretold: whereas it so exactly applies to *him*, that Nehemiah, a Jewish ruler, who was born about 50 years before him, even at that time declared openly, that the appearance of the Messiah, pre-signified by Daniel, could not possibly be protracted *beyond* those 50 years. Another epocha, already touched upon, (see book i. chap. xvii.) coincides with the foregoing; in relation to a future *Universal Kingdom*, of divine origin, the commencement of which should follow the extinction of the Syrian and Egyptian monarchies; the last of which expired with Cleopatra not a great many years before the birth of Christ. A third collateral point of time we meet with also in the ixth of Daniel, (see ver. 25.) wherein it is foretold, that "the people of the prince \* that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary," *after* the event of the Messiah's coming shall have taken place.---Now this prophecy respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, is referred by Josephus himself to his own time; and consequently the predicted period of the Messiah's appearance must

OF THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH NATION

... Titus. ... then

them have been already past. Again, in the second chapter of Haggai, when Zorobabel, governor of Judah, and Joshua the son of Josedech the high priest, were sorrowful to see that the temple, which they had raised, was "as nothing in comparison" of the greatness of the *first* temple, God consoles them with a promise "that the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the glory of the former:" which promise, it is plain, from the sacred historians as well as from the writings of Josephus, in relation to these times, collated with the history of the temple of Solomon, cannot possibly be understood in reference to the size or materials, the workmanship or ornaments of the building. Besides, it is remarked by certain Jewish rabbins, that the second temple was deficient in two most essential endowments of the former temple: these were, a singular degree of effulgent Brightness, expressive of the Divine Majesty; and a gracious communication of the Holy Spirit from above. But the point of preference and superiority in the latter house, God briefly declares to be, the *gift of his peace*; that is to say, the gift of his grace and blessed favour "in that place," as being about to establish himself therein, as it were, by a sure covenant. The prophet Malachi goes on more expressly to the same purpose, "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple," (now Malachi lived in the time of the *second* temple) "even the messenger of the covenant, in whom ye delight."—The Messiah therefore was necessarily to come, while the second temple was yet standing: under which description, according to the Jews, is comprehended the whole of that period

riod from Zorobabel to Vespasian : \* because in the time of Herod the great, the temple was not absolutely rebuilt out of ruins, but gradually repaired and altered, so as to make it still retain the appellation of the same temple. And indeed, so constantly and generally was the Messiah expected, by the Jews and by their neighbours, to appear *in those days*, that Herod and Judas of Galilee, (see Acts chap. v. ver. 37.) and others who lived about the time of Christ, were all, severally, mistaken for the true Messiah.

## C H A P. XV.

(NEITHER CAN IT IN REASON BE SUPPOSED THAT THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE SHOULD RETARD HIS COMING.)

CONSCIOUS of the weight and forcible conviction of these arguments respecting the appearance of Messiah, the Jews, in order to elude them, are sometimes absurd enough to say, that the sins and offences of their own nation were the occasion of his non-appearance at the time appointed.

Not to mention the express language of the prophecies aforesaid, pronouncing the decree independent of all conditions, and subject to no single reservation, how could it be possible that the sins of the people should have deferred his coming, when we

\* The second temple stood therefore about 600 years : being founded about two years after the return of the Jews, under Zorobabel, from the Babylonish captivity, which happened in the year 538 before Christ ; and destroyed about the 69th year of the Christian æra, by Titus, in the reign of Vespasian. The first temple was built by Solomon, 992 years before Christ ; and lasted about 400 years, being destroyed by Nebuchodonosor, in the 598th year of the same epocha before Christ.

might collect from the same prophecies, that the heinousness and number of those sins would occasion the destruction of their city, shortly *after* the time of the Messiah? Moreover, for this very cause the Messiah was to come; to heal the transgressions of an impious generation, and to bring, together with his precepts for their future amendment, his pardon for their past iniquity. Hence it is that Zechariah saith, in speaking of that period, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness;" (see chap. xiii. ver. 1.) and among the Jews themselves, the appellation of 'Isch copher,' i. e. *the appeaser*, is generally received as a term for the Messiah. Without further argument, however, it is an obvious insult, a palpable affront to *reason*, to assert that a remedy, precisely intended for any particular disorder, should, merely because of that disorder, be delayed in the application.

## C H A P. XVI.

THE SAME POSITION PROVED, FROM THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE JEWS COMPARED WITH THE PROMISES CONTAINED IN THE LAW.

COMMON sense alone might surely be sufficient to convince the Jews of the truth of our assertion, that the Messiah came long ago into the world. In the covenant which God made with the Israelites, by the hand of Moses, he promised them a happy possession of the land of Palæstine, so long as they should live conformably with his commandments; but threatened them with exile and with various calamities



calamities of a like nature, in case of their rebellion or wilful disobedience: nevertheless he continued to assure them, that had they, at any time, beneath the weight of their afflictions, and through a sense of sorrow for their sins, returned to their obedience, he should ever be found ready to compassionate his people; and should "gather them from all nations," however distantly and widely scattered, to restore them to their native land: (see to this effect the xxth of Deuteronomy, and the first of Nehemiah, as well as other parts of holy writ.) A period, however, of more than 1700 years hath now elapsed, during which the Jewish nation can boast no country of their own; no temple for their general resort; and if ever they attempt to build one, they are constantly obliged to abandon the design: nay we find it recorded by Ammianus Marcellinus, a writer not of our persuasion, that even balls of fire burst forth from the foundations, and destroyed their labours.--- In former times, we find, when the children of Israel had defiled themselves with crimes of every denomination and degree; when the practice of offering up their sons and daughters in sacrifice to Moloch,\* was every where adopted; when adultery was become familiar; when they spoiled the widow and the fatherless, and poured forth abundantly the blood of the innocent, (with all which crimes they are upbraided by the prophets) the sentence of exile, it is true, was put in execution against them; but the short period of 70 years was the whole term of that exile, and during its continuance God failed not to address them occasionally by the mouth of his pro-

\* Moloch is the planet Saturn; the Jews still call it by that name. See Grötius on the Old and New Testament, in his note upon the xviiiith of Deuteronomy, ver. 10. For the mention of this practice, see particularly 2d Kings, xxiii. 10. 2d Chron. xxviii. 3. Jeremiah, vii. 31.---xix. 5.

phets; and not only to comfort them with the future expectation, but even to apprize them of the certain date, of their return. In later times, however, when once ejected from their native land, we see them remaining to this day an outcast and derided people : no prophet to address them ; no intimation given of any future return : while, seized as it were with a giddy spirit of infatuation, their rulers, all of them, are fallen from the real word of God into idle absurdities and ridiculous opinions, which the books of the Talmud so abundantly contain ; books which they impudently call their *Oral Law* ; and which they have not only the assurance to compare with, but even to prefer before, the books of Moses. So absurd are the accounts there given of God's penitence and tears for having suffered the destruction of their city ; of his daily application to the study of their law ; of the Behemoth, the Leviathan, and various other matters ; that the very mention of them is irksome and offensive. Still, however, in so long a period, the Jews never have been found to turn aside towards their former idols ; never do they defile themselves as heretofore, with slaughtered sacrifices ; no charges of familiar adultery are now alleged against them ; but they labour earnestly with prayers and fastings to appease the wrath of God : nevertheless, their fastings are ineffectual, and their prayers are disregarded. Upon these grounds, therefore, which truly represent their situation, the alternative becomes unavoidable ; that either the covenant declared to them by Moses is entirely at an end ; or that the whole Jewish community do still remain beneath the bondage of some grievous sin ; of which they have constantly been guilty for so many successive ages :—the nature of that sin I call upon themselves to name ; or, if *they* cannot declare it, let a Christian be for once believed when he assures them, that

that it certainly consists in their impious contempt of the Messiah, who was to come into the world, before the commencement of those calamities under which they have so long laboured.

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## C H A P. XVII.

THE PREDICTIONS DELIVERED IN RESPECT TO THE MESSIAH, DEMONSTRATE JESUS TO BE THAT VERY PERSON.

**T**HUS have we now established our assertion, that the Messiah has already made, many ages ago, his appearance in the world.—Our next position is, that *Jesus* is that same Messiah. The pretended or reputed claimants of that sacred title, have all, in their turns, died away and are forgotten, without ever having left any sect behind them as converts and adherents to their cause.—Where shall we now look for the professed followers of Herod, the zealous advocates of Judas of Galilee, the learned dupes of Barchocheba, that famous impostor in the days of Adrian? To Jesus on the other hand, from the time of his appearance to the present moment, multitudes ever have been, and ever are, willing to apply the glorious appellation of Messiah; and this, not in one country only, but in every quarter of the known world. It would here be easy to adduce many other particulars foretold or believed of the Messiah, which, while they are not even pretended to in other instances, we believe to be undoubtedly verified in Jesus. His descent, for example, from the house of David; his more immediate descent from an immaculate virgin; (an event, communicated from heaven to the husband of that virgin, who,

who, on finding her with child, would otherwise have put her away privily;) the place also of his birth; at Bethlehem; the commencement of his preaching, in Galilee; the miracles displayed by him, in healing all diseases, in making both the blind to see and the lame to walk;—it is easy, I say, to adduce these and similar events, but I readily confine myself to the observation of one single circumstance, as amply sufficient for the proof required, the effect of which endureth to the present hour: I mean that strong and very manifest intention of the prophecies of David, Isaiah, Zechariah, and Hosea, announcing the Messiah as a future ruler, not only of the Jewish nation, but of “the Gentiles also, unto the end of the earth;” through him were “all the idols to be utterly abolished;” through him, were the strangers, the inhabitants of many cities, to be joined to the Lord.”

The universe, before the coming of Christ Jesus, was sunk; for the most part, in superstition and idolatry; but after that event, those miserable effects of ignorance and error began gradually to disappear: and not only private individuals, but kings also, and whole nations were converted to the worship of the One true God. These blessed revolutions were effected, not by the Rabbins of the Jewish nation, but by the disciples of Jesus and by their successors. Thus did *they* become a people of God, “who were not his people;” (see Hosea chap. ii. ver. 23.) and thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Jacob (in the xlix chapter of Genesis) that the civil power should not depart \* wholly from the posterity of Judah, until

\* Hyrcanus, the second of that name, of the Hasmonean race, lost the sceptre of the Jews; which passed by permission of the Romans to Herod the Idumæan: in his time was Jesus born; but though by Herod’s usurpation the Jewish sceptre was much shaken, yet it was not *wholly broken and abolished* until the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. A. C. 70.



Shiloh come : by whom, according to the Chaldean interpreter and others, is intended the Messiah ;  
 “ unto whom also should the Gentiles seek.”

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## C H A P. XVIII.

IN REPLY TO THOSE WHO ARGUE, THAT SOME PRE-  
 DICTIONS REMAIN STILL UNACCOMPLISHED.

**T**HE general objection of the Jews upon this occasion is, that some particular prophecies, respecting the times of the Messiah, are not yet come to pass. The instances adduced, however, are either of an obscure nature, or of an ambiguous interpretation: surely then we ought not on account of these, to neglect those manifest and striking truths, which all must understand, and none can misinterpret. The sanctity of the precepts enjoined—the excellence of the reward proposed—the plain and simple language in which it is set forth—these, I say, together with the miracles which Christ performed, ought, doubtless, to recommend his doctrine to our warmest and heartiest embrace. To understand indeed the more obscure prophecies, the language of “ the book closed up and sealed,” as they are sometimes called, we have frequent occasion, it is true, for certain portions of the divine assistance; but that assistance is deservedly withdrawn from those who wilfully disregard what is open and obvious to all. The Jews themselves are conscious, all the while, that the passages produced against us admit of various expositions: and whosoever will compare the ancient interpreters, either in the time of the Babylonian exile, or about the commencement of the Christian

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tera, with those who wrote afterwards, when the Jews had contracted their violent aversion against the Christian name, will frequently perceive the original explanation of passages, (when that explanation was sufficiently agreeable to the sense in which the Christians understood them) supplanted by some other of a later date, which the spirit of party has been industrious to discover. They cannot but be conscious also, that the scriptures are not always to be taken in their strict literal expression, but often in a kind of figurative sense: as when they speak of God 'coming down' from heaven; or describe him as a being possessed of the parts and organs of the human body. What objection can there be then to a similar explanation of several predictions, in relation to the times of the Messiah? as when, for instance, it is said, "that the wolf shall dwell with the lamb; that the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion and the fatling together: that the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp; and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den: that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills: that all nations shall flow unto it, and all flesh shall worship before the Lord."—Other instances there are, moreover, wherein a tacit *condition* is included in the promises, either by the words antecedent or subsequent, or even by the very sense and meaning of the promises themselves. Thus did God make many promises to the Jewish nation; upon condition that they would receive the Messiah when sent among them; and would faithfully observe his will. Whosoever those promises have failed, themselves have been the guilty cause.—If, further, there be other promises, express and unconditionate, which as yet are unaccomplished,

the completion of them may be still expected; for even by the Jews themselves it is allowed, that the reign or kingdom of Messiah is fixed upon the basis of *eternity*.

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## C H A P. XIX.

TO THOSE ALSO WHO OFFER, AS AN ARGUMENT AGAINST US THE HUMBLE CONDITION IN WHICH JESUS LIVED, AND THE IGNOMINIOUS NATURE OF HIS DEATH.

THE lowness of our Saviour's situation in the world, is a frequent matter of offence. It is however not more frequent than unjust; Hath not God assured us in almost every page of scripture, that he raiseth up 'the poor and lowly' and bringeth down 'the proud in spirit to destruction? When Jacob passed over Jordan, he carried with him nothing but his staff; when he returned thither, he had camels and asses, and 'much cattle.' So likewise Moses, in exile and in poverty, was keeping the flock of Jethro, when God appeared to him in the bush, and appointed him the leader and deliverer of his own peculiar people. David in like manner, was called from the sheepfold to the throne; and various other instances of the same nature, are abundantly supplied by holy writ.—With respect to the Messiah, we are even told that he was to come, "to preach good tidings to the meek;" no strife, no cry of his, 'was to be heard in the streets,' but in the fullness of his lenity, "the bruised reed should not

not be broken, neither should he quench the smoking\* flax."—But as the lowness of our Saviour's fortunes, so also the various calamities of his life, and even the ignominious manner of his death, can never be a just occasion of offence to any man. The instances of Abel, who was slain by his brother; of Isaiah, who was "sawn asunder;" of the mother and the seven brethren of the Maccabees, who expired under tortures, are sufficient to convince us, that God often hath been pleased not only to subject the righteous, like Lot in Sodom, to the persecutions of the wicked, but hath even suffered them to die beneath their violence. "The dead bodies of thy servants have they given," say the Jews themselves, in their constant repetition of the lxxixth Psalm,) to be meat unto the fowls of the air; and the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the land: their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem, and there was no man to bury them." (See ver. 2, 3, and seq.)—Then as to the Messiah himself, the necessity of *his* sufferings and death, previous to the attainment of his kingdom, and of the power of distinguishing his Church by his best and choicest blessings, can never be denied by any man who will seriously attend to the language of the liiid chapter of Isaiah; "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty

\* *Ellychnium* is, literally the *wick of a candle*; but metonymically translated "flax." it is proper to observe further, as I have retained the old *negative expression* of the general translation of this passage, from which Grotius has departed, that here as in many places a figurative expression is adopted by the scriptures, by which less is expressed than is intended. See Hardy's Cr. Test. upon the passage.



that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he hath done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travel of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."—What king, what prophet hath been born, to whom these expressions can apply? None, doubtless, can be found

found !---The later Jews pretend, indeed, to understand this chapter as a prophecy relating wholly to their own nation, in the general dispersion of them into all countries, for the purpose of obtaining every where, as well by their example as their arguments, many converts to their cause.

This interpretation, however, is, in the first place, altogether repugnant to the evidence of the sacred writings, which loudly and repeatedly declare, that all the miseries and punishments inflicted on the Jewish nation, have been always, not only justified by their iniquities, but greatly inferior to their deserts. The whole tenor of the prophecy, in the second place, is incapable of such an explanation. "*For the transgression of my people was he stricken,*" saith the prophet : speaking either in his own person, (which seems the better reading of the passage) or else as the representative of God. Now the people of Isaiah, or even the peculiar people of God, are certainly the Jews: and consequently, the subject of those sufferings which are thus represented by Isaiah, can never be the same people. The ancient Jewish Rabbins admitted, more wisely, that these expressions did really relate to the Messiah; and some of their descendants, in consequence of this, have pretended to make two Messiahs: the one they call the son of Joseph, by whom various calamities and a cruel death were to be endured; the other, the son of David, with whom all things should succeed and prosper. Far more easy to themselves, and far more consonant with the writings of the prophets, would it be, to acknowledge and receive One only Messiah, who was destined to pass through misery and death to the attainment of his blessed kingdom. This important truth, in the firm belief of every Christian, was verified in Jesus; a truth, established beyond all contradiction, by its own intrinsic evidence!

## CHAP. XX.

AS WELL AS THE REPUTED PROBITY OF  
THOSE, WHO DELIVERED UP OUR SAVIOUR  
TO THE CROSS.

**T**HERE are, doubtless, many of the Jews, who would readily embrace Christianity, were they not kept back by some early prepossession in favour of the virtue and integrity of their ancestors; and especially of those very priests, whose prejudice waited not the forms of trial to pass sentence against Jesus, and reject his doctrine. That I may not, however, be supposed to speak ill of them upon personal or private authority, I could wish the present race of Jews to receive the general and real character of their ancestors, as the language of their law and of their prophets hath expressly drawn it. "Their ears and their hearts are uncircumcised," saith the prophet Jeremiah: "with their lips" and outward ceremonies "do they honour God," saith Isaiah, "but they have removed their hearts far from him."—Their ancestors it was, who had nearly carried into execution that bloody conspiracy against their brother Joseph, which ended not, at last, without the actual disposal of him for a slave in Egypt. Their ancestors it was, whose continual seditions drove Moses to complain that his life became a burthen to him; Moses, their leader and deliverer, to whom earth and sea and air were in obedience: their ancestors it was, who loathed the bread of heaven, and "while the flesh of quails was yet between their  
teeth,"

teeth," murmured against God, as if left in the severest want. Their ancestors it was, who, in open violation of their duty and allegiance to that great and excellent king David, ungratefully espoused the cause of his rebellious son. Their ancestors it was, who cruelly murdered Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, "even in the court of the house of the Lord:" nor was the sanctity of the priesthood itself sufficient to protect him from their impious barbarity. Then if we consider the chief priests in particular, we find the supporters of that sacred character conspiring the death of Jeremiah by a false impeachment: and, doubtless, their design had been effected, had not certain of the elders interposed their authority: still, however, they extorted a permission, to detain him in captivity, until the very moment of the taking of Jerusalem. But now, should it ever be imagined that the priests, who were contemporary with Jesus, were men of better principles, that error may be soon removed by reading, in Josephus, the description of their flagrant enormities, as well as their unexampled punishments: and yet, he himself is of opinion, that the severity of the latter, after all, was greatly inadequate to the guilt of the former. Their Sanhedrim itself is entitled to no higher estimation: especially as the members of it were at that time not chosen as formerly by votes, expressed by the imposition of hands, but in servile obedience to the nod of power: the pontifical office, in like manner, was now no longer a perpetual, but an annual dignity, and frequently procured by money. No wonder then, if men of boundless arrogance, of insatiable ambition and avarice, were driven into transports of rage and indignation, at the sight of One, the difference of whose conduct, by inculcating precepts of the utmost purity and virtue,

was



was in itself a satire on their own lives.---Nor was the purport of their charge against him any other, than what the best of men, in all preceding times, had constantly experienced ; thus, we see, the prophet Michaiah, in the reign of Jehoshaphat, was thrown into prison, for having boldly asserted the truth in opposition to 400 false prophets. Ahab objected against Elijah, as the priests did against Jesus, that he was the disturber of the peace of Israel : the charge also which was brought against Jeremiah, as it was likewise against Jesus, was the prophecy respecting the destruction of the temple. The record of the ancient Rabbins ought here to be remembered, wherein it is declared that, in the times of the Messiah, there would be found men, impudent as dogs, obstinate as asses, and savage as wild beasts.---God himself, who long before had seen what the Jews in general would be, at the time of the Messiah's coming, had declared that it should come to pass, "that they who were not his people should become his people:" and that "one of a city and two of a family" among the Jews, should scarcely be found to go together to his sacred mountain, but that strangers out of every nation should supply their places : in like manner he foretold that the Messiah should be "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" to the Jewish nation ; nevertheless he hath assured us, that "the same stone which the builders refused, shall become the head-stone of the corner."

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## C H A P. XXI.

IN REPLY TO THE CHARGE OF POLYTHEISM, ALLEGED AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS.

**W**E are now to answer two remaining charges, with which the Jews at once attack us on the points

points of doctrine and of worship. In the first place, they accuse us of worshipping a plurality of gods. This, however, is no more than an exposition of some foreign tenets maliciously wrested to such an application. For why should this be urged as an objection against the Christians rather than against Philo Judæus, who has frequently established a Trinity in the Deity; and who calls the *reason* or *word* of God the *name* of God; the maker of the world; neither unbegotten, as God the Father of all is; nor so begotten as the human race are? The same is also called, both by Philo himself and by Moses the son of Nachman, an angel or messenger, regarding and protecting this universe: why against the Christians, I say further, rather than against the Cabalists, who consider the Deity as three distinct *Lights*; and some indeed adopt the very same appellations, that we do, of Father, Son or *Word*, and Holy Spirit?—But now, to avail myself of a fact, universally and especially admitted by the Jews, *that* Spirit, by which the prophets were impelled, is a something *Uncreate*; yet is mentioned as a *distinct* essence from *that* which sent it: and the Jewish Shechinah\* is, again, considered as a similar distinction. It hath, moreover, been recorded by several of the Hebrew writers, that the Vis Divina (that *Divine Energy*) which by them is called *Wisdom*, was to dwell in the Messiah: and hence the Chaldaean paraphrast gives to the Messiah the appel-

\* The Shechinah may perhaps, though imperfectly, be described to be, "a bright and luminous appearance which symbolically represented the Divine Presence, and was seen to *rest itself* (as it were) between the cherubims over the mercy seat, when the priest went into the Holy of Holies. This was the peculiar glory of the first temple."—See further on the subject of this miraculous phenomenon, in Prideaux's *Connect. &c.* part i. page 119, folio. See also Jennings's *Jewish Antiq.* vol. ii. page 29. And Lowman's *National of the Hebrew Ritual*, part ii. chap. 2.

lation of 'the Word of God;' hence also he is called, in David, in Isaiah and elsewhere, by the august title both of God and Lord.

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## C H A P. XXII.

AS WELL AS TO THE CHARGE ALLEGING, THAT THEY WORSHIP A BEING OF THE SAME NATURE WITH THEMSELVES.

WITH equal readiness we meet their second accusation, which charges us with rendering that worship to a creature, which alone is due to its Divine Creator. But here we must deny our offering to the Messiah any other homage, any other worship than what we are enjoined by scripture to perform. See Psalm ii. and cx. The first of them, imperfectly fulfilled indeed in David, is yet acknowledged by David Kimchi himself, a strong opponent of the Christians, to belong in a more excellent sense to the Messiah. The latter cannot possibly be explained of *any other* person: for as to the pretended expositions of the later Jews, who refer it, some to Abraham, others to David, and others to Hezekiah, they are all frivolous and absurd forgeries. We learn from the superscription, that the psalm itself is written by David; how then is it possible to apply *his* expression of "The Lord said unto my Lord," &c. either to David himself, or to Hezekiah, who was one of the descendants \* of David, and a man of not more distinguished excellence than his pious

\* David began to reign about the year 1055, and Hezekiah his lineal descendant, about the year 726 before Christ.

progenitor

progenitor? As to Abraham, *he* never was possessed of any priestly office of distinction; nay, we find him in the light of an inferior receiving a blessing from Melchisedec: whereas, both the passage above mentioned and the subsequent expression, that a rod of power should come forth out of Sion, and should extend to the remotest corners of the earth, are jointly and evidently accomplished in the Messiah, as similar passages demonstrate, which treat of him expressly, in terms not to be mistaken: besides, the more ancient Hebrews and paraphrasts have never understood them in any other sense. For myself, indeed, I could readily believe the fact, that Jesus of Nazareth is the proper and identical object of these prophecies, from the perfect integrity of his own disciples, if it rested solely upon their affirmation; in the same manner as the Jews believe the single and unsupported evidence of Moses, in regard to those commissions and directions which he said were immediately communicated to him from God himself; but, exclusively of this testimony, we have numerous and most convincing proofs of that Supreme Power, to which we affirm Jesus Christ to have attained: he was personally seen by many upon earth after his resurrection; he was seen also "carried up into heaven:" by his name alone evil spirits were cast out, and diseases were no more: the gift of tongues also, which Jesus himself had promised as a sign of his attainment to that power, was 'poured out' on his disciples: moreover, his sceptre, that is to say, the tidings of the gospel, gone forth out of Sion, (exactly as the Psalmist had foretold) went out into the uttermost corners of the earth; and this, not effected by the weak aid of man, but solely by the power of God: unto that sceptre even nations bowed, and kings became obedient: I cannot conclude without observing, that

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the Jewish Cabalists maintain the doctrine of a certain intercessor, as well in nature as in office, between God and man; subsisting as they tell us, in the person of a son of Enoch: not a single instance, however, hath this son of Enoch ever given of a power so transcendent! with how much greater justice; then, do we assign that character to *him*, who hath proved himself to us by such signal miracles, such certain and undoubted tokens!—And when we place him in this exalted point of view, we by no means derogate thereby from God the Father, because it is from him alone that this power is derived unto Jesus, to him alone it will return, and to his sole glory and service it is utterly devoted.

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### C H A P. XXIII.

#### A DISMISSION OF THE SUBJECT, WITH PRAYER FOR THE JEWS.

**T**O engage in any nicer disquisition of these matters, would exceed the limits and design of the present undertaking: nor should we indeed have proceeded thus far, but that we were willing to elucidate this truth to all; that nothing either impious or absurd is contained in the doctrine of our Saviour, so as to afford the least excuse to any man for not embracing a religion, at once distinguished by miracles so wonderful, enjoining precepts so amiable, and promising rewards so glorious! For as to any special matters of enquiry, respecting this religion, it becomes immediately incumbent upon all who may embrace it, to apply for information and assistance to those sacred books, wherein are fully comprehended,

hended, as we have already shewn, all the principles and duties of Christianity. To accomplish, in the Jews, this blessed end, vouchsafe, O Lord, to enlighten all their hearts and understandings with the peculiar spirit of thy grace, thereby rendering those prayers effectual, which Christ himself, when even dying on the cross, poured forth for their forgiveness!

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## BOOK THE SIXTH.

### CHAP. I.

#### A REFUTATION OF MAHOMETANISM:—THE ORIGIN OF THAT RELIGION.

**A**S we now professedly commence our attack upon the followers of Mahomet, we intend, by way of preface to the present book, to trace the progress of God's judgments against the Christians down to the immediate origin of the sect above mentioned: to observe, that is to say, how all that real and pure piety, which had flourished among the Christians in the days of their severest persecutions and oppressions, gradually degenerated into coldness and indifference, from the period, in which Christianity was rendered, by Constantine and by succeeding emperors, not only a profession of safety, but of honour: a period, when all the world were driven, as it were by force, into the Christian church: it was then that Christian princes became first engaged in bloody and perpetual wars, though the blessings of peace were now within their power; it was then, that

prelates, regardless of the sacred character, were seen to give a loose to ambition and to avarice, by all the most desperate extremities of mutual animosity : it was then, (as, heretofore, the tree of knowledge was fatally preferred before the tree of life) that the prying efforts of learned speculation were in higher estimation than piety, and men made a trade of their religion : like the builders of the tower of Babel, they consequently fell, by a rash affectation of sublimity, into dissonant harangues and jarring sentiments : the common people, continually bewildered in this scene of contradiction, retorted all the blame upon the scriptures, and began to shun them as a baneful poison.—The *inward* purity of true religion, by a gradual revival, as it were, of Judaism, universally became converted into *outward* ceremony : prescriptive formalities, which rather exercise the body than improve the mind, together with a zealous and unbounded fury, in defence of parties once adopted ; were declared to constitute *religion* ; till at length, Christianity was every where supported by many *nominal* professors, but by few, very few in *fact*.—God suffered not his people to commit these enormities unnoticed ; but pouring forth the swarming inhabitants of the utmost corners of Scythia and of Germany, he deluged, as it were, the whole Christian world with the barbarous invaders : and when all the havoc and excessive slaughter which they committed, were still insufficient to bring back the survivors to their duty, with just indignation he permitted Mahomet to plant a new religion in Arabia ; a religion directly combating in fact, every principle of Christianity, but somewhat ostensibly adapted, in theory, to the lives of the generality of Christians. The Saracens, who had revolted from the emperor Heraclius, were the first embracers of this doctrine : by their arms Arabia, Syria, Palæstine,

fine, Ægypt, and Persia, were speedily subdued; they then proceeded to infest Africa, and even crossed over into Spain. But as other nations, so in particular the Turks, who in themselves were also a very warlike people, became afterwards possessed of the Saracen power: having long waged war against the Caliphate, they at length listened to a treaty of alliance; and presently adopting a religion which was fitted to the manners and customs of their own nation, they at last transferred upon themselves the whole authority of the empire: the cities of Asia and of Greece were unable to withstand them, and as their conquests became more extensive, even Hungary and the German territories experienced the power of their arms.

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## C H A P. II.

### AN UTTER SUBVERSION OF MAHOMETANISM, ON THE GROUND OF ITS PRECLUDING ALL RELIGIOUS ENQUIRY.

**E**VIDENTLY established upon sanguinary principles, the religion of Mahomet delighteth much in rites and ceremonies; and, utterly prohibiting all freedom of enquiry, demandeth the most absolute and implicit faith; in consequence of which, all books that are accounted sacred, are strictly prohibited and carefully withholden from the profane eyes of the common people. A prohibition, like this, is in itself an immediate and plain indication of iniquitous proceedings: a commodity, thus blindly and forcibly obtruded upon any man, is deservedly an object of suspicion. All men, it is true, possess not equal abilities or equal judgment: pride, pas-



sions, and the strength of habit, will severally force them into error : but that the path which leadeth to eternal salvation cannot possibly be known by those who seek it, uninfluenced by views of advantage or of honour, with a total surrender of themselves and of all that they possess, to the will of the Almighty, imploring him to aid and to direct their endeavours; this, I say, the infinite goodness of the Divine Being forbids us to believe : and certainly, since God hath implanted in the mind of man, a faculty of reason and discernment, it cannot be employed in the search of any truth, more worthy of its whole exertion, than that, wherein a state of ignorance unavoidably endangers our eternal salvation.

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### CH A P. III.

THE MAHOMETANS CONFUTED, FROM THE SCRIPTURES OF THE HEBREWS AND THE CHRISTIANS; NEITHER ARE THOSE SCRIPTURES CORRUPTED.

THE divine mission of Moses, as also that of Jesus, and the sanctity of the primitive dispensers of the gospel, are admitted by Mahomet and his followers as undoubted truths. The Alcoran, however, which is the law of Mahomet, very evidently and frequently contradicts the accounts which Moses and the disciples of Jesus have delivered down to us. To select one instance out of many; the real crucifixion of Jesus, his resurrection on the third day, and his subsequent appearance unto many upon earth, are facts established in the strongest manner by the full and united evidence of all the apostles and disciples of our Saviour : the doctrine of Mahomet, on the other hand, affirms, that Jesus was secretly withdrawn

drawn into heaven, and that an effigy of some kind or other was nailed upon the cross in his stead : that, therefore, Jesus never died, but that the public eye was blinded by a gross imposture.—Here then, our antagonist, as the only evasion that can possibly be devised, thinks proper to assert, that the books originally written as well by Moses as by the disciples of Christ, have since been variously altered and corrupted. This falsity, however, hath already been refuted. See book iii. chap 15.—What if we should say that corruptions had obtained in the Alcoran ? the Mahometans of course would contradict us, and would urge the sufficiency of their simple negation against any affirmation that we could offer, unsupported by proof : not that the Mahometans are able to adduce those voluntary proofs in favour of the purity of their Alcoran, which we do on the side of scripture, in regard to the immediate and universal dispersion of the sacred copies, (not written, truly, like the Alcoran, in *one* language only) as well as in the faithful and unanimous preservation of those copies, by so great a variety of sects, so widely dissentient about other matters. The Mahometans have a notion, that in the xivth chapter of St. John, where he speaks of the sending of the comforter, some passage, which the Christians have erased, was originally extant in relation to Mahomet. But here I should be glad to ask them, whether they would chuse this alteration of scripture, antecedent or subsequent to Mahomet's appearance ? The latter was evidently impossible, because numerous copies of *more than one* version of the scriptures were, at that time, already extant in all parts of the world, not only in the Greek language, but in the Syriac, the Arabic, (and that too in many places far distant from Arabia) the Æthiopic, and the Latin.—These, all of them, without any variations in the text, coincide

side in the passage above mentioned. Then as to any prior alteration, what reason could there be for making it, since nobody could possibly divine what future opinions would be started by Mahomet? Nay if nothing had been really contained in his doctrine contradictory to that of Christ, why should the Christians have been more averse from the reception of his books, than they were from the reception of the books of Moses and the Hebrew prophets?—But now, for the sake of argument, let us mutually suppose that nothing was ever written in regard to the doctrine of the one, or of the other: a principle of equity would, in that case, direct us, to consider as the several doctrines of Jesus and of Mahomet, those precepts and opinions which are ascribed to each of them, distinctly, by the unanimous consent of their respective followers.

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#### CHAP. IV.

##### FROM A COMPARISON OF MAHOMET WITH CHRIST.

TO ascertain, therefore, the title to a preference thus severally claimed, let us now proceed to a comparative inquiry, in regard to the properties and qualities of each particular doctrine; beginning with a brief comparison of their respective authors. That Jesus was the promised Messiah, whom the law and the prophets had announced, is a truth admitted even by the personal confession of Mahomet: by the same confession is he stiled, the *Word*, the *Wisdom*, and the *Mind* of God. And again, in another place it is allowed by Mahomet, that Jesus had no earthly father. The Mahometans themselves,

themselves, on the other hand, ascribe not the existence of their leader to any preternatural effect; he was born and begotten like themselves. The whole tenor of our Saviour's life was spotless and irreproachable: that of Mahomet was long engaged in violence and rapine; and addicted throughout, to lust and debauchery; and while Mahomet himself acknowledges that Jesus, after death, was carried into heaven, his own mouldering remains are, at the present hour, imprisoned in an earthly sepulchre. Who then can hesitate to say, unto whom the preference is due?

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## C H A P. V.

### ON THE ACTIONS ALSO, RESPECTIVELY PERFORMED BY THEM.

**L**ET us next consider their respective actions.—Through Jesus did the blind receive their sight; through Jesus did the lame “leap up and walk;” through Jesus were the sick made whole, and, as Mahomet himself confesses the very graves gave back their dead.—The pretended missionary of Arabia, on the other hand, asserts the authenticity of his credentials, not with a miraculous, but with a martial power. There are some indeed of his bigotted adherents, who maintain that he was also a miraculous agent; but what are the nature and extent of his miracles? they are such only, as are easily effected by human art alone, like that of the dove flying down to his ear; or else, like the prodigy of the camel addressing him by night, they are simple and unattested assertions of his own: while the intrinsic absurdity of other miracles recorded of him, is alone sufficient to evince their falsity: of this number



is that memorable story, which assures us, that a considerable portion of the moon fell down into his sleeve, which the wise impostor happily replaced, in order to restore the former rotundity of that *unfortunate* planet!—Surely then, in any doubtful cause, (if this can be considered in that light) we should regulate our judgment by the tenor of that law, which is able to adduce in its behalf more certain attestations of a sanction from above!—But now, proceed we to examine, further, the general character of those men, who originally embraced the respective tenets of Jesus and of Mahomet.

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## C H A P. VI.

### THE PRIMITIVE RECEIVERS OF EACH DOCTRINE CONSIDERED.

**T**HE comparison may be given in a word: the first converts to Christianity were men, who, living in the fear of God, and in singular simplicity of manners, were, *therefore*, morally secure of the Divine Protection against every delusive story, and every pretended miracle: the first followers of Mahomet on the other hand, were a lawless and desperate banditti, estranged altogether from the ties of humanity and the duties of religion.

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## C H A P. VII.

### THE METHODS RESPECTIVELY EMPLOYED IN THE PROPAGATION OF THE TWO RELIGIONS.

**W**E come now to represent the means, by which each religion was promoted in the world.—In regard

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regard to Christianity, the continual and extensive progress which it made, resulted, as we have frequently before observed, from the miracles performed, not only by our Saviour himself, but by his disciples also, and by their successors; nor was it in a slight degree assisted by the very circumstance of that unshaken constancy displayed by them under every calamity, persecution, and torture. But where are we to find any miracles performed by the impotent disciples of Mahomet? Where are we to find any grievous calamities endured, any death of torture undergone by them, for the sake of their religion? A religion obsequiously following the career of victory, and simply the result of conquest: a religion, in defence of which the very teachers and professors themselves have nothing more to offer than that very fallacious and insufficient argument, derived from the successful issue of their wars, and the extensive limits of their empire. Do not they themselves exclaim against the rites of Paganism? And yet it is notorious what amazing victories were gained, what extensive empires were possessed, by the successive powers of Persia, Macedonia, and Rome! The Mahometans, moreover, were by no means constantly victorious: repeated overthrows in various parts, are known to have befallen them by land and sea; the whole sect of them in Spain was utterly expelled the kingdom\*. The fate of war, then, subject as it is to continual vicissitudes, and capable of serving indiscriminately the cause of virtue and of vice, can never be a certain token of the true religion: and this more especially, in the present instance, as the arms of the Mahometans were employed in oppression and injustice; directed fre-

\* Immediately after the taking of Granada, under Ferdinand and Isabella, in the year 1491.

quently against a people which never had molested them; against nations known to them by no single injury on *their* part; the pretext of religion, therefore, was all that they could offer to palliate their aggressions; a conduct, in itself, the highest act of *irreligion*! The only worship of the Deity is the free and voluntary worship of the heart: now the powers of the will are to be won insensibly by the alluring voice of instruction and persuasion; but never can be gained by menaces or force. Compulsion and fear may indeed enforce hypocrisy, but never can induce conviction: an inclination to extort compliance by violent or intimidating measures is, in fact, a confession of distrust in the fairer field of argument. After all, however, this very pretext of religion is, again, destroyed by the Mahometans themselves, when they tolerate all kinds of religion in the people subdued by them; and sometimes even openly admit the sufficiency of Christianity itself to place its adherents in a state of salvation.

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## CH A P. VIII.

### A COMPARISON OF THE PRECEPTS RESPECTIVELY ENJOINED BY THEM.

LET us now proceed to a comparison of the precepts also, which Christ and Mahomet respectively inculcate. On the one hand we find patience, on the other hand revenge, to be a precept of religion: and whilst we are taught by Christianity to love even our declared enemies, the sullen Mahometan, in the malice of his heart, sits brooding on some future vengeance. The Christians are commanded to preserve indissoluble the sacred obligation

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of the marriage vow, by mutual concessions, and mutual forbearance; separation and divorce are the avowed practice of the licentious followers of Mahomet. The Christian husband bears an equal part in all the duties of the married state, and his wife is instructed, by his own example, in the *only* proper object of her whole affection. The Mahometan sensualist, on the contrary, has wives and concubines at pleasure; continually provoking by some new incitement, the keenness of his brutal appetite. By the precepts of the one, religion is restored and inwardly implanted in the heart, that there, by due cultivation, it may bring forth good fruits, to profit and instruct mankind: by the precepts of the other, the whole virtue of that sacred plant is nearly wasted and consumed in outward ceremonial applications, in the rites of circumcision, and in other matters of an indifferent nature. The one regards not what we eat or drink, within the bounds of temperance; the other is absurd enough to pronounce the flesh of swine unlawful food, and totally forbids the use of wine; whereas wine is undoubtedly a blessing, if moderately used, intended for the good and comfort of our minds as well as bodies. It is not to be wondered at, indeed, that childish elementary instructions, as it were, should have preceded the introduction of an infinitely perfect law, like that of Christ; but after the promulgation of that express law, to return to typical and figurative meanings, is the height of all possible absurdity; neither can any shadow of a reason be assigned, to make the introduction of another subsequent religion either requisite or expedient, when the world was already blessed with Christianity, by far the most excellent of all possible religious systems!



## CHAP. IX.

THE MAHOMETANS ABSURDLY OBJECT AGAINST US,  
FOR STYLING JESUS THE SON OF GOD.

THE followers of Mahomet pretend to take offence at our assigning unto God a Son, when he never had a wife; as if the name of Son were incapable of being understood (when speaking of the Deity,) in a sense more adapted to the Divine Nature. Mahomet himself, however, when he tells us of the coldness of God's hand; of his own sensible experience of it; of God's being carried about in a chair, and of other similar absurdities; is surely representing God in a manner altogether as unworthy of him, as if we were to speak of him as having, in reality, a wife. But when we apply the appellation of the Son of God to Jesus, we mean exactly what Mahomet himself intends by calling him the *Word* of God; for, by a peculiarity of generation, as it were, a word is the offspring of the mind.

But the filiation of our Saviour is yet further justified, upon the ground of his immediate descent from a pure virgin, by the sole operation of the Divine Essence, in place of the natural means of generation; as also upon that of his ascension into heaven, effected by the power of his Divine Father. Hence then, (and Mahomet expressly admits the truth of these very particulars) it is evident that Jesus, with a singular degree of right, not only may possibly, but must indispensably, deserve the appellation of The Son of God.

CHAP.

## CHAP. X.

NUMEROUS ABSURDITIES IN THE BOOKS OF THE  
MAHOMETANS.

IT were a tedious undertaking, on the other hand, to enumerate the various particulars, recorded in the writings of Mahometans, in open violation of the truth of history; and the various absurdities therein asserted, in direct opposition to common sense.---Such is the story which they tell us, of a beautiful woman, whom a set of *drunken angels* had instructed in a particular form of incantation, whereby she was enabled to mount into the air and descend again at pleasure; till at length, during one of these sublime expeditions, she was suddenly apprehended by the Deity, who fixt the fair trespasser for ever to the spot on which he found her: to which happy incident the world is indebted for the planet Venus. Such, again, is the story of a mouse in Noah's ark, which arose from the dung of an elephant; while a cat, on the other hand, sprang up, all at once, from the breath of a lion. Such, more especially, is that of the future transformation of Death into a ram; under which description this mortal enemy of ours is then to be confined, *as in a fold*, in some intermediate space between the upper and the lower regions. Then again, the preposterous ideas entertained by them, that, in the next life, the secretions of the body will be carried off by perspiration; and that the joys of Paradise are intended to consist in the sensual delights of a Turkish seraglio.---These and

similar absurdities are surely of so gross a nature, that nothing but a voluntary state of stupefaction, a criminal and wilful ignorance, can actuate the blind abettors of them; especially when the clear and unerring light of the gospel dispensation is lavishly diffused around them.

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## CHAP. XI.

A CONCLUSIVE ADDRESS TO ALL CHRISTIANS IN GENERAL; THE FOREGOING OBSERVATIONS AFFORDING US A PROPER OPPORTUNITY TO ADMONISH THEM OF THEIR OWN DUTY.

HAVING thus dismissed the final disputation in which we were engaged, we proceed to the concluding branch of our whole undertaking; and here we no longer now address ourselves to Pagan, Mahometan, or Jewish disputants, but to Christians of every denomination and degree; presenting a summary display of the use of the foregoing observations, in teaching them at once the practice of all good, and the utter abhorrence of all evil. Be it, then, their first care to lift up their hands in purity unto that God who out of nothing created all things visible and invisible; with a full and certain confidence, that God "careth for us all," seeing that a single sparrow falleth not upon the ground "*without our Father*;" moreover, "be they not afraid of them which kill the body only, rather than of him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell;" let them, also, have "access with confidence," not alone in God the Father, but likewise in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; "for none other name under

der heaven is given unto men, whereby they must be saved;" nor can that confidence be otherwise attained; than by a recollection that eternal life belongeth not to every man who calleth with his lips, the one, Father, and the other, Lord, but only unto him who keepeth, with a willing heart, the tenor of their joint commandments. And further, we exhort them earnestly to keep with all diligence and care, as a treasure of inestimable value, the sacred precepts delivered by our Saviour; to this end, frequently examining the purport of those holy writings, by which no man can ever be deceived, except he shall have previously deceived himself. The writers of that sacred volume, they may well assure themselves, were men too faithful to the trust reposed in them, too fully enlightened by Divine inspiration, to wish us ever to remain in total or in partial ignorance of any necessary truth: and therefore we ought rather to bring with us a mind submissive and obedient in all things; for thus we cannot fail "to become wise unto salvation," by knowing every object of our faith, our duty and our hope: hereby stirring up and cherishing within us the gift of that spirit, "the earnest of our future happiness." It hath also been the business of the present pages, to render the imitation of any *Pagan* practice a matter of abhorrence to the Christian world; as well in regard to the worship of false gods; "of idols which are nothing;" mere instruments employed by evil spirits to turn us from the worship of the One True God; (for we cannot be "partakers of the things which the Gentiles sacrifice," and profit at the same time by the sacrifice of Christ;) as also in regard to the habits of excess and immorality in which the *Pagans* live; subject solely to the dictates and law-



less desires of the flesh.—With infidels, like these, what fellowship can Christians have, when the latter are expressly told that it is incumbent on them, not only to be far superior in goodness to the heathen; but also, that “except their righteousness exceed the ostensible and external righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven?”

Then as to the errors of the *Jewish* nation, we have further shewn, that it is not “the outward circumcision of the flesh that now availeth any thing,” but the inward circumcision of the heart; “the keeping of the commandments of God;” the being made a “new creature;” the assurance of “a faith which worketh by love:” these are the distinctions that bespeak a man “an Israelite indeed;” “a Jew in the spirit and not in the letter;” in other words, a faithful member of the Church; by whom God is truly glorified.—At the same time have we shewn that the *formal* distinctions, established by the Jewish dispensation, in respect to meats and Sabbath-days and festivals, are all only “shadows of the things” which should be realized, by the Author and professors of the Christian faith.

Then again, the errors of the *Sect of Mahomet* have given us occasion to admonish all the followers of Christ of the positive prediction delivered by our blessed Lord, assuring us, that after his time false prophets should come into the world, pretending to be sent from God; but that, if “an angel from heaven” should appear to us, we ought never to receive any other doctrine than that of Jesus Christ, approved to us by testimonies so strong and so conclusive: God indeed, at sundry times and in divers manners

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spake in time past unto the fathers, but hath graciously been pleased, "in these last days, to speak unto us by his Son, the Lord of all things, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; by whom all things are created, whether they be things past, or things to come;" who governeth and upholdeth all things by his power; and who by his blood, having washed out our sins, ascended into heaven to the right hand of the Father, and hath there obtained, far above the angels, a throne of majesty, a crown of glory!—And is it, after all, still possible to look for any future lawgiver, whose mission should exceed in grandeur and importance the mission of our Saviour! From the same topic, we have further been enabled to remind every Christian, that the soldiers of Christ are commanded to be armed, not with that armour to which Mahomet referred the justice of his cause, but with the special armour of the spirit, "proper to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God;" putting on "for a shield, faith, whereby we may repel the fiery darts of Satan; for a breast-plate, righteousness," or true integrity; "for an helmet," (as the best protection of the weakest part) "the hope of salvation:" for a sword, "the quick and powerful word of God," which pierceth even to the innermost recesses of the heart.—Moreover, in the next place, we prefer a general exhortation unto all, that they keep, one toward another, that harmony and concord, which Christ, at his departure, so earnestly enjoined to his disciples: that they ought not to receive amongst them "many masters, for one is our master, even Christ:" that all Christians are baptized in the same

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Blessed name; that therefore, no schism or divisions should exist among them; and in order to administer, at length, some remedy to these dissensions, we would wish them to remember how strongly the apostles reprobate the vain conceits of human wisdom; commanding all men never to "think highly of themselves;" but "soberly according to the measure of that knowledge, which God hath given unto every one."—"Him that is weak in the faith," according to St. Paul, "receive ye, and bear with his infirmity; that thus he may incorporate with us in peace;" but "not to doubtful disputation." If any man excel others in the measure of his knowledge, it is just that he excel them also in the measure of his diligence: but they "who in any thing are minded otherwise" than we are, would do well to wait with patience until God discover also unto them, the latent truth: in the mean time, "whereunto we have attained, let us all "hold fast our profession;" let us all, as far as we are able, be "doers of the word." Now know we in part; but the time cometh, when it may be given us to know with certainty the full manifestation of all things.

To every individual we likewise add our entreaties, that he keep not unemployed, the talent entrusted to his care; but like a faithful servant, that he labour with unwearied diligence to gain also other converts unto Christ; not only adopting, to this end, the means of godly conversation and verbal admonitions, but likewise, by a newness of life, affording in himself "a pattern of good works:" that so, the goodness of the servants may approve the goodness of the master, and the purity of their lives the purity of his law.

And now, returning to the object of my first address, to all my countrymen I finally appeal, beseeching

secching them, if any thing in these my labours, may be found conducive to the cause of virtue and religion, to render unto God the praise : " If any thing offend," I intreat them to consider, as well the general propensity to error, inherent in our nature, as also the particular circumstances of time and place, under which I thus hastily present them with a work, the true and honest effusion of my heart, rather than a studied and elaborate performance of my pen.'

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